

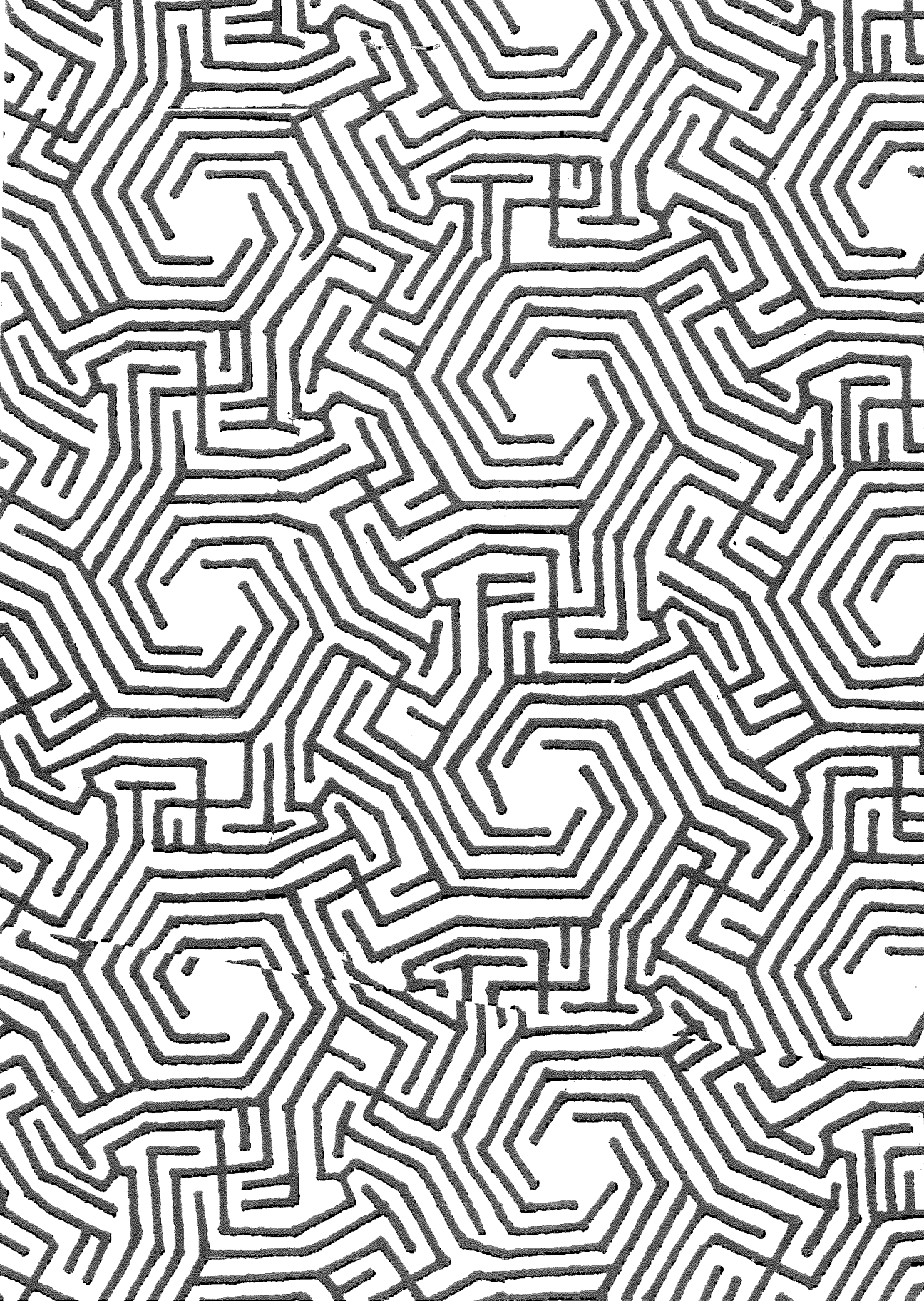
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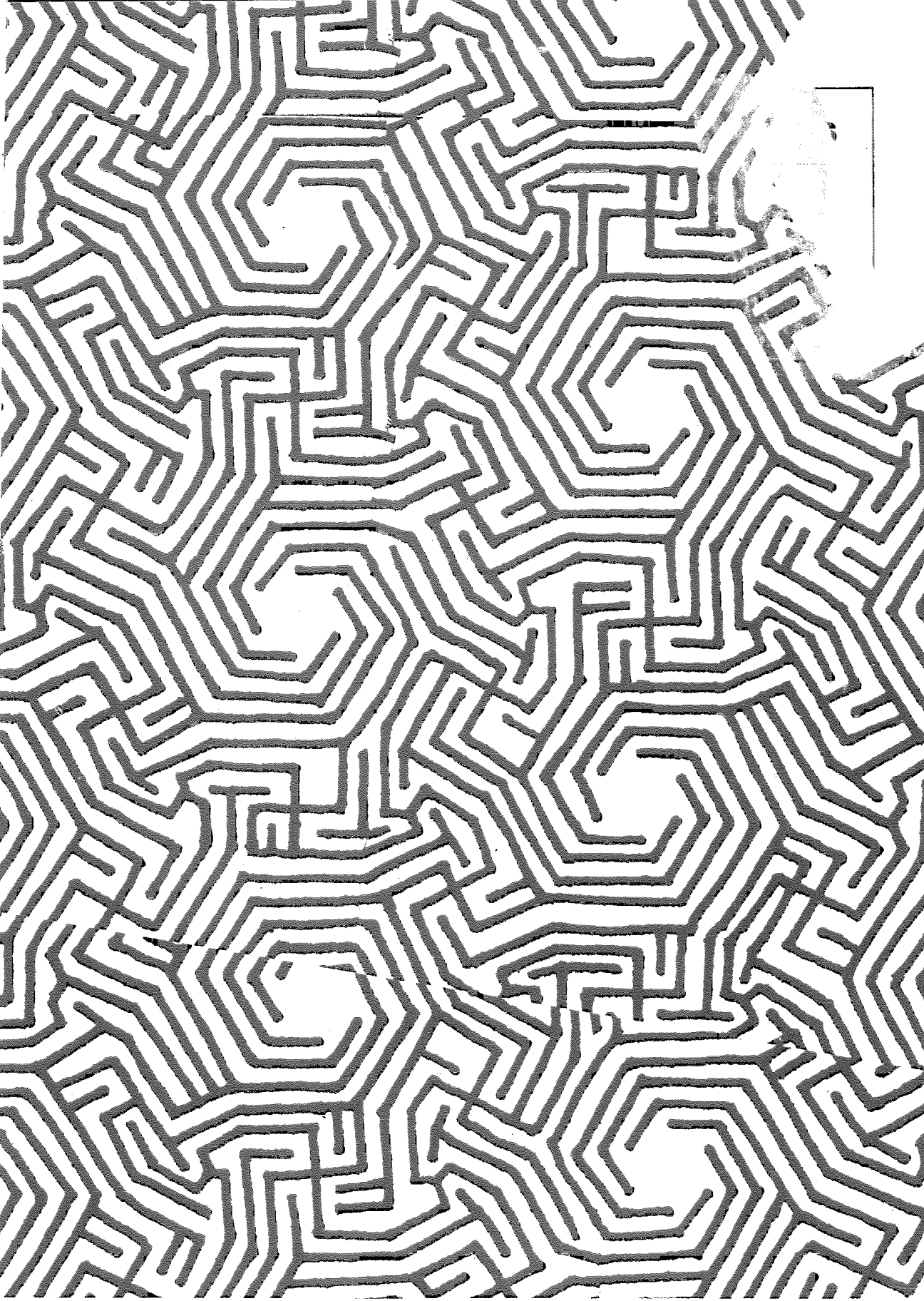
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FEMINISM AND REPRESENTATION
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Errata

Screen vol 21 no 1

We would like to apologise to authors and readers for a number of unfortunate errors in this issue.

The correct title for Victor Burgin's article is 'Photography, Phantasy, Fiction'.

The correct title for John Ellis' article is 'On Pornography'.

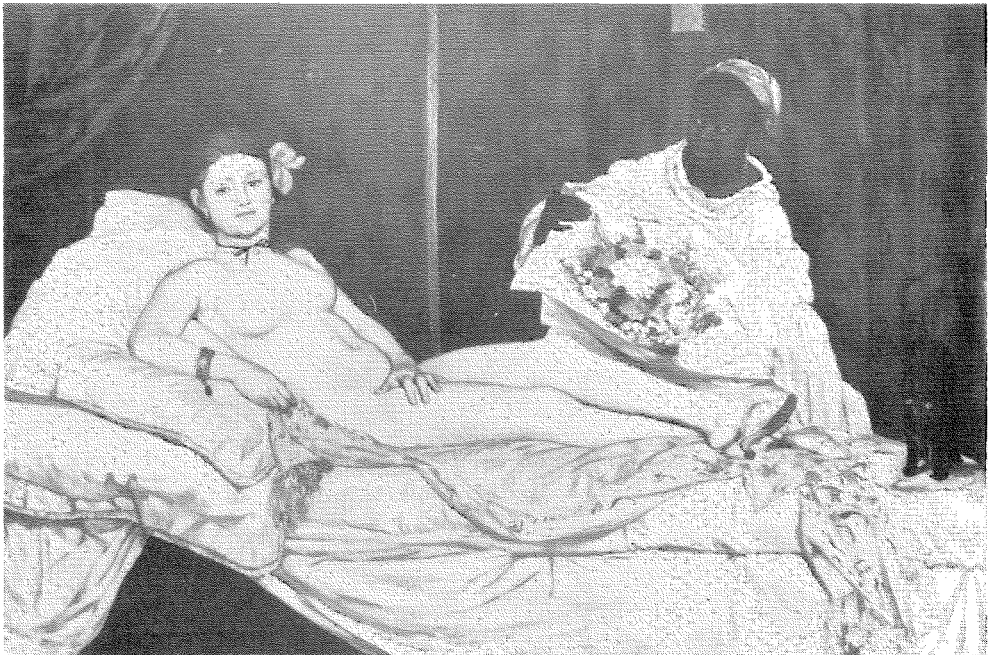
The cat referred to in Tim Clarks's article, 'Preliminaries to a Possible Treatment of *Olympia* in 1865' was unfortunately removed by the engravers. We reproduce the complete picture below.

We also reproduce *Young Woman Pioneer* 1930 by Rodchenko, referred to in Victor Burgin's article. The image on p 51 of Victor Burgin's article is *Head of a Young Woman*, 1930, also by Rodchenko.

We are particularly concerned with the poor quality of the reproduction in this issue, and hope that the technical problems involved have now been resolved.



A Rodchenko
*Young Woman
Pioneer*, 1930



MANET *Olympia*

EDITORIAL

7

Screen's work has been centrally concerned with subjective positioning in the cinematic institution. Several articles in this issue attempt to understand the relations of subjectivity in the interweaving of textual and social, to see subjectivity in social and historical terms. They indicate the need for greater attention to practices (in the areas of production, distribution and exhibition) which attempt to displace dominant discourses in the culture. We are concerned here with both an 'inside' to discourse — challenging the terms of the subjective, and an 'outside' — calculating its effects on other discourses and practices. This issue addresses these questions particularly in relation to areas of feminism, art practice and pornography. We are very pleased to include a number of responses to earlier articles in *Screen* and hope that readers will want to contribute to these and other debates.

Writing about the future development of feminist film culture in Britain, Claire Johnston also extends the question of strategies to women's art practice, maintaining that a unified, non-contradictory feminism is no longer a threat to the institutions of art exhibition and criticism, whereas a feminist art which asserts a discourse about the intersubjective relations which constitute feminine positions in history is far less likely to be assimilated into dominant representations of women. In their account of

recent women's art practice, Judith Barry and Sandy Flitterman maintain a similar position. In particular they are concerned to stress the contribution that theoretical work can make to a feminist art practice.

In her article in this issue, Susan Honeyford points to the ways women are organising in relation to the institutions of broadcast TV in this country. At issue is both the images of women that TV maintains and the lack of representation of women in the institutions themselves, in production, technical and managerial positions. As she indicates, there is a growing awareness that both areas have to be worked on together if women are not to be simply co-opted into the existing structures and modes of representation.

In his article responding to John Ellis' piece in our previous issue ('On Pornography', *Screen* vol 21 no 1), Paul Willemen draws attention to pornography as a regime of looking. In particular he elaborates the notion of the fourth look, the possibility of being overlooked in the act of looking, which gains particular force in the area of pornography where the viewer is looking at something at which, for reasons of internal (superego) or external (legal) censorship he or she is not supposed to be looking. He argues that pornographic imagery must be seen as both determining and determined by competing discourses and institutions, and that changes in the public presence and acceptability of pornographic imagery are accounted for by the institutionalisation of the fourth look. An institutionalisation which sets the terms both of the representations and their economic exploitation. In particular he argues that a proliferation of vaginal imagery and of images of women signified as experiencing sexual pleasure is to be regarded as:

An emphatic insistence on the centrality of male pleasure [suggesting] that the male population in western societies now requires to be reassured more often, more directly and more publicly than before.

What emerges is again that pornography is an important area for the exploration of the relations of the textual and social.

In his polemical response to Tim Clark's article in our last issue ('Preliminaries to a Possible Treatment of Manet's *Olympia* in 1865') Peter Wollen contests Clark's notion of

the relation of the textual to the political. Wollen argues that if we are concerned with the production of a sexual subject in a particular social formation, then in considering Manet's *Olympia*, for instance, we should be concerned with the production of 'woman' as fetish within a particular conjuncture of capitalism and patriarchy. Fetishism, Wollen argues, enables a coherent account of the contradictory readings which Manet's painting appears to offer and in the face of which Clark proposes an effectively Realist *politique* — that painting should provide a recognisable image drawn from the world of class struggle and class relations. This, Wollen goes on to argue, is to deny the whole enterprise of modern art practice, and the possibility of building a more radical, political, avant-garde on the basis of the 'complex forms of seeing' which modern art practice provides.

Text and conjuncture are also at issue in Paul Kerr's article which discusses the role that the signification of Vietnam has taken in recent American cinema and considers problems raised by some critical approaches adopted at a recent Manchester-SEFT weekend school.

In response to an earlier article by Sue Clayton and Jonathan Curling ('On Authorship', *Screen* Spring 1979 vol 20 no 1), Michael O'Pray takes up the question of authorship in relation to independent exhibition practice, and argues that questions of subject relations in film *production* should also be addressed.

As a further contribution to work on copyright developed in *Screen*, Jeanne Allen argues that the development of cinema as a mass entertainment industry was partly achieved by the way in which the law developed protection for cinema as a form of private property. Cinema was better protected, and hence open to more successful financial exploitation than theatre and vaudeville, because production and distribution were protected by patent law as industrial processes, while cinema's commodity status was protected by copyright law. She also argues that the ideology of legal institutions was such that they discriminated in favour of visual forms of representation.

Finally, we were very sorry indeed to hear of the sudden death of Paddy Whannell, and we publish below an appreciation by some of his colleagues.

MARK NASH

PADDY WHANNEL

PADDY WHANNEL died on 8 July 1980. We had the privilege of working closely with him at various points in his life. It is appropriate that his passing be marked in these pages, for he was a major figure in British film education.

Paddy was born in Pitlochry, Perthshire, in 1922. He left school at 14 to become a projectionist at his local cinema. He remained there until 1942 when he joined the Royal Navy, serving as a mechanic in aircraft carriers until 1946.

The immediate post-war period, with a popularly-mandated Labour government, was in many respects one of the most open 'moments' in modern British history. Paddy took advantage of the one-year teacher training courses being offered to ex-servicemen and attended Alnwick College in Northumberland, now regrettably closed but for a long time a centre of film education. From 1948 he taught Art in Surrey schools, initiating the work and making the contacts which resulted in his becoming Education Officer of the British Film Institute in 1957.

A tradition of 'film appreciation' had existed within the British Film Institute and its constituency prior to 1957, firmly rooted in the impulse which had led to the setting up of the Institute: the protection of young people from the imagined harmful effects of popular cinema. This was achieved by leading them to 'appreciate' 'good' cinema such as the Soviet Cinema of the twenties, the British Documentary cinema of the thirties and the British tradition of literary adaptation of the forties. It was Paddy's signal contribution, together with the department he began building, to make connections between the BFI, film pedagogy and wider educational questions and to begin to democratise the 'film appreciation' tradition.

As a working-class intellectual formed in the fight against fascism and in the ethos of the post-war Labour government, in the

fifties and sixties, Paddy was much influenced by the work of figures of similar formation — for example Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams. The position which was developed owed much to the work of F R Leavis but repudiated the conservative, anti-technological, anti-mass media elements. Paddy's relationship to this tradition is best seen in the articles he wrote at the time for *The Teacher* (with characteristic humour under the pseudonym, Albert Casey, a minor figure drawn from his other great passion — jazz) and in the book he co-wrote *The Popular Arts*. Paddy constantly measured the validity of his own stance against the critical and theoretical problems being posed with regard to the cinema. This move made him look beyond the 'popular culture' position and, in particular, create the conditions within which film study could engage with structuralism and semiotics. This required considerable courage at a time when to utter these very words invited contempt or vilification in British culture.

Paddy's contribution to film culture, film education and the understanding of popular culture was enormous. Indeed, it was he who created the concept of 'film culture', which is now part of our critical vocabulary. His publications alone tell only a small part of the story. His work as a teacher, an administrator and a tireless encourager of others, of which the chronicle is (necessarily) unpublished, has more to tell. His fight to establish film education in Britain and to situate it within a democratic concept of culture as a whole, was conducted on many levels. His friends can bear testimony to his power of personal example, his loyalty and his courage. Those who worked with him will remember (and the records amply confirm) his tireless pursuit of issues of principle, his concern with the clarity of policy objectives and the development of means to carry them out. He was always open about his sympathies and antipathies and demanded the same openness in

others. During his years at the British Film Institute he built up a department capable not only of responding to the needs of teachers in the field but of guiding the development of film education within a set of clearly expressed cultural priorities. But the success of the enterprise required that the priorities expressed in the Education Department's project either be accepted in other quarters or challenged with the same degree of clarity and conviction. As the record shows, no one rose to his challenge. In 1971 Paddy resigned from the British Film Institute and five of his colleagues in the Education Department resigned with him. (These events are documented in *Screen Autumn 1971* vol 12 no 3.)

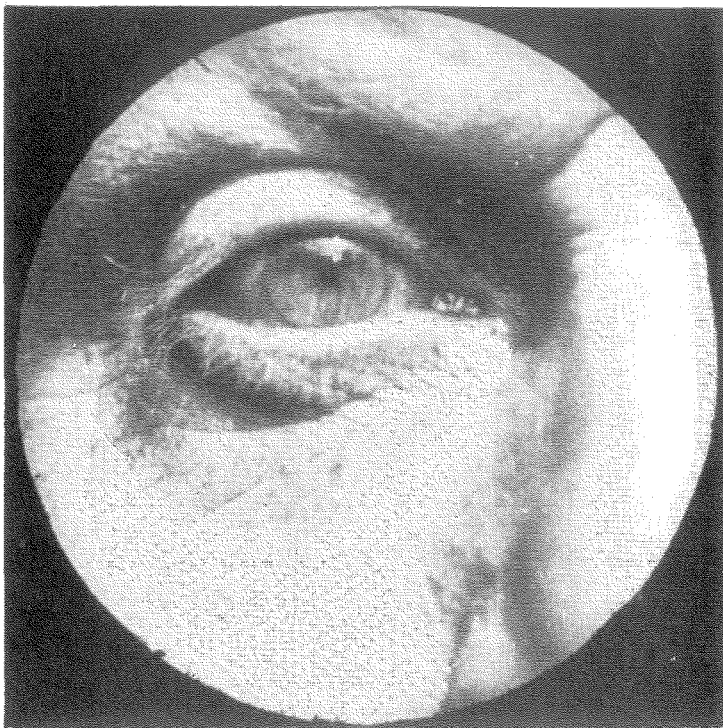
After leaving the BFI, Paddy accepted a post as Professor of Film at Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, where he devoted himself with equal energy and integrity to the new tasks set for him in a changed environment. The change to a university environment he found both stimulating and relaxing but he never lost his commitment to film education in schools and he worked extensively with teachers in high schools and community colleges in the mid-West. We are sure that his colleagues and students in America will want to join us in this tribute to him.

In the nine years since Paddy left the BFI, many of the changes that he called for have in fact been implemented. Both the Educational Advisory Service (now returning to its old title of Education Department) and SEFT have developed in ways made possible only by the work which Paddy pioneered in the 1960s. Other sections of the BFI have also acquired a clearer awareness of their cultural role. It is a sad irony that his death should occur just at the moment when he had earned a year's sabbatical and returned to the UK. This return, from what had become a form of exile, would have allowed him to see at closer quarters the developments of traditions which he initiated.

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Grandma's Reading Glass (1900)



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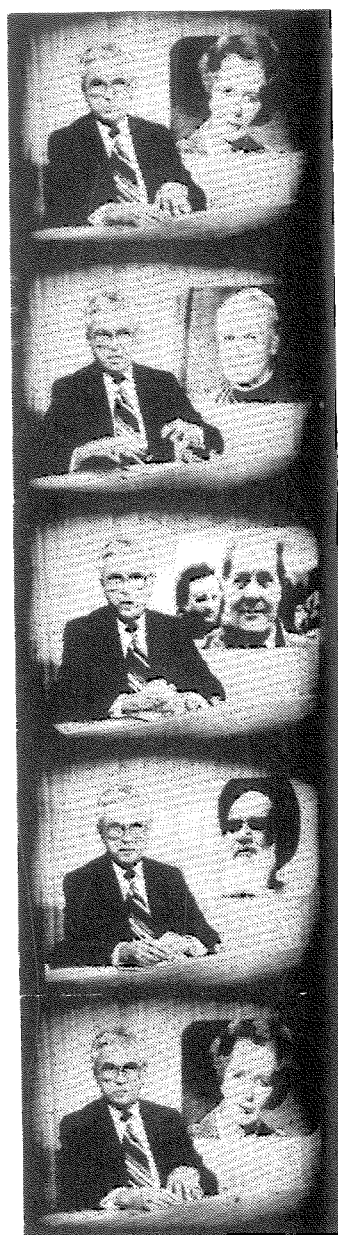
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PETER WOLLEN

15

MANET: MODERNISM AND AVANT-GARDE

TIMOTHY CLARK'S ARTICLE ON MANET'S 'OLYMPIA,' 'SCREEN,' SPRING 1980

I

MANET'S *OLYMPIA* ENJOYS, in Timothy Clark's words, 'canonical status in the history of avant-garde art'; it represents a pivotal moment in the transition from one paradigm of art to another, which has dominated the art of our century. Starting from scholarly considerations on the muddled verbiage and gross abuse which greeted Manet's painting when it first appeared in 1865, Timothy Clark moves, via a critique of various aesthetic and politico-critical shibboleths and precepts he associates with *Screen*, towards what is in effect a root-and-branch rejection of the whole modernist movement, including its radical avant-garde sector. The rhetorical strategy he uses is to posit a reading of *Olympia* and then generalise this to cover all Manet's 'progeny', contrasting the paradigm-shift which did take place with another that did not (Stalinist Russia? Maoist China?), signposted not by Manet but by Courbet: Realism with a capital R.

The meaning of Manet's *Olympia*, according to Clark, is (or was in 1865) open rather than closed, unfixed rather than established or tied down, shifting, runaway, endless, interminable, lacking a brake or an anchorage, destabilised, not maintained or kept in being, multiple rather than single or uniform, not adding up, not endowed with coherence, not articulated, inconsistent, insignificant, ineffective. In short, a failure. Manet's *Olympia* colludes in 'the dance of ideology' and a 'harmless play of the signifier'. At most, it achieves an isolated 'minor act of disobedience'. Nobody can 'get the picture right' and if they do (a single critic of the extreme left) this is 'inadvertent' and in any case it only leads

inexorably to yet another 'stew of half-digested significations'. Manet's refusal of the space of male fantasy is not an 'active refusal' like Courbet's, it only achieves a stalemate, not a refutation; Manet's painting may be a provocation to the bourgeoisie, but it's not an act of resistance, like Courbet's, a 'positive aggression'.

The burden of Timothy Clark's litany of subdued but carefully contrived invective is that a painting (a Realist painting) should provide a clear, consistent and complete picture, drawn from the public and familiar world of class division and class struggle, able to command unambiguous recognition. Conversely, Manet's *Olympia* is unclear, inconsistent and incomplete, duplicitous about class, and its ambiguities lead to a complicity with misrecognition in its basic structure, if not in its immediate terms. This, it seems to me, is the fundamental antithesis, the 'one single' thing Timothy Clark is saying, in relation to which he can make a number of concessionary remarks and nuancing reservations about the need for complexity, the risk of over-optimism, the advantages of letting meanings out for a supervised excursion before they must 'circle back' to base, the 'sense of the possible' which we may or may not have, the avoidance of philistinism.

II

Let's start, as indeed we should, with class. This, it seems to me, is the point where Timothy Clark, in his exegesis of *Olympia*, is most confused. 'The signs of social identity are as unstable as all the rest'. Does he really think that class identity is something necessarily clearly and definitely fixed? That a successful prostitute might carry the signs of more than one class seems inadmissible to him. Yet a prostitute, particularly one who employs a servant, wears jewellery, refuses to be abject as she should and to abhor luxury, simply is not an unambiguous proletarian. It is misleading to call her 'just another seller of an ordinary form of labour power', just as it would be to designate an artist as proletarian on the same grounds. She is a freelance, selling services, successfully enough to employ someone else. The maid, according to Timothy Clark, is a 'stock property, derealised'. Odalisque and slave, distorted through the prism of modern life: of course this is what is going on in the picture, but certainly clarity cannot be achieved by whisking away jewellery and maid, and placing *Olympia* back on the streets where she came from, unambiguously.

In effect, what is at stake here is something more complex and

more important than the question whether we can pin down Olympia to a proletarian class position or not. The issue is rather the very possibility of 'recognition' in the untroubled way Timothy Clark conceives it. Granted, for the sake of argument, that a prostitute such as Olympia is properly a proletarian in the way Timothy Clark *requires*, does that really mean that she would spontaneously assess herself as proletarian, that she is not only able, but 'liable' in his words, to flip back to seeing herself as she really is, proletarian, if she were not 'constantly re-engaged' by bourgeois ideology? Only, surely, if she were engaged (constantly, we hope) by another, alternative, contrary ideology. Timothy Clark says as much himself, at a later point: what would be needed would be 'another set of terms', another 'structure' within which forms of recognition were produced.

Put simply, an alternative (true) class recognition can only take place within the structure of an alternative class ideology. The terms of this structure, Timothy Clark goes on to say, 'would have themselves to be *settled*, consistent, forming a finished sentence'. The elements of such a new structure already exist, 'the meanings of the dominated'-produced in class struggle-but they are not yet settled, complete and consistent. They still need work — a work, not just of critique and dismantling of the old, but rather of construction and discovery of the new, not *ex nihilo* but in the historic practices of class struggle. How then, until class struggle itself is settled and completed, can any alternative structure of ideology be settled and completed? Timothy Clark is forced to oscillate between a demand for completion ('It may be that I am asking for too much') which he himself half-suspects is Utopian, and an assertive hope that it is really there already, unflipped-back just when you look for it, but surely there when your back is turned, when the dance stops.

The problem lies in the very project of Realism, the idea that there is Reality and here am I (and Olympia, and Manet, and Courbet) and I can recognise my place in it — tied down, got right, given an identity — as though, in 1865 for instance, Marx was not still scribbling away at *Capital*, the first volume not yet quite delivered to the printers, to be proof-read for a year and published in 1867. As though, in fact, there were no class struggle, no history, because, in fantasy, history is precipitately at an end, settled, completed: 'a finished sentence'. It is precisely the 'open' nature of history which makes it Utopian or illusory to call for an alternative art which is 'closed': in fact, this closure can only be on the terms laid down by the dominant ideology,

1 Lucio Colletti, *Marxism and Hegel*, London 1973. See especially the chapter on 'Kant, Hegel and Marx'.

which must make every effort to efface contradiction and close down the shutters, which must represent history as permanently and perpetually over.

III

In his book, *Marxism and Hegel*,¹ Lucio Colletti argues against the project of a dialectical logic, based on the existence of contradictions in the real. He distinguishes between oppositions in the real (A versus not-A; paradigmatically, class struggle, for instance) and contradictions in the real (both A and not-A, hence infringing standard criteria of identity). Oppositions in the real can be adequately handled by standard logic. Contradictions in the real, Colletti argues, are an inadmissible inheritance from Hegel, an epistemological nonsense for any materialist. He points out, and it is extremely salutary that he did so, how marxist commentator after marxist commentator has obscured this confusion and toyed with the idea of contradiction, in reality (passing rapidly over the problem of the appropriate logic). Colletti's aim is to strengthen the ties of marxism with the sciences and regularise marxist epistemology on what he regards as a materialist basis. So far, so good. In support of his argument he cites numerous passages from Marx which in fact seem to assume the existence of contradictions in the real, though Lucio Colletti asserts that we can see from them that Marx's entire critique of political economy hinges on the theme of 'the irreducibility of opposition in reality to logical opposition'.

In a later article in *New Left Review* 93, Colletti returns to his argument. Again he attacks the idea of a 'dialectic of matter' which demands a logic violating principles of identity and non-contradiction established in standard logic. However, he returns to the very sections of Marx which he previously quoted from in his book and this time acknowledges that they do indeed assert the existence of real contradictions:

In the beginning there was a oneness, succeeded by an era of rupture and separation, destined to culminate in capitalism; then, on the basis of these newly-emerged, superior conditions, an eventual reconciliation of the contradiction between individual and class, a supersession of the separation of man from man, and man from nature, becomes possible. If somewhat modified, the schema of Hegel's philosophy of history blooms again. Therewith is revealed the second face of Marx, alongside that of the scientist, the naturalist and observer.

Marx, in fact, — the Marx of *Capital* — is revealed as a philosopher rather than a scientist. The consequences, according to Colletti, may prove fatal, unless the philosophy of *Capital* can be reconciled with and subordinated to some future social science, hardly yet begun.

For Colletti then the scientificity of marxism falls on the logical Law of Contradiction. At first sight, this seems a crushing blow, one which not only, in Timpanaro's words, 'demands the careful attention of marxists',² but a definite choice. Either Colletti's views must be accepted, or marxism must be construed as a philosophy rather than a science without any compunction, or Colletti must be refuted. Timpanaro, it seems, would take the view that a non-standard logic is needed 'for the historical sciences' at least, but he gives absolutely no indication of what it might be, and indeed, given his general pro-positivist bias it's hard to imagine what he might have in mind. It's probably impossible to disentangle positivism from standard logic.

However, it has recently been maintained by two logicians, Nicholas Rescher and Robert Brandom,³ that inconsistency can be tolerated in a non-standard logic, without any loss of rationality. They argue that the two crucial logical laws, the Law of Excluded Middle and Law of Contradiction, can be dropped from the system of logic, while leaving the rest of the structure intact, limiting and containing the specification of inconsistency ('an inconsistent world will be such that certain theses obtain together with their negations' — but only certain, specific theses, without damage to the overall rationality of the system). They make the further claim that non-standard worlds and objects should be given ontological parity with standard ones. (Non-standard, or Meinongian, objects are those whose properties are inconsistent.)

Marx's claim in *Capital*, as stated by Colletti, can thus be read as a claim that the world of capitalism is a non-standard world, insofar as it is posited on the historical development of a non-standard object, the commodity. Under Marx's description in *Capital*, the commodity is a Meinongian object.

The antithesis, use-value and value; the contradictions that private labour is bound to manifest itself as direct social labour, that a particularized concrete kind of labour has to pass for abstract human labour; the contradiction between the personification of objects and the representation of persons by things [Versachlichung; reification]; all these antitheses and contradictions, which are immanent in commodities, assert themselves, and

2 Sebastiano Timpanaro, *On Materialism*, London 1975, p. 80.

3 Nicholas Rescher & Robert Brandom, *The Logic of Inconsistency*, Oxford, 1980. For marxist theories of dialectic, see especially the chapter on 'The Recent Period of Inconsistency-Toleration'. The most consequent responses to Colletti, in *Issues in Marxist Philosophy*, vol 1 'Dialectics and Method', John Mepham and D-H Ruben (eds), Brighton, 1979, tend to limit dialectics to the study of real oppositions (as well as differences, developments, dependencies, complexities etc) rather than contradictions, while rejecting Colletti's Kantianism. However Chris Arthur's reading of *Capital*, in the same volume, doesn't seem to me far from Colletti's, despite his different evaluation of its status.

*develop their modes of motion, in the antithetical phases of the metamorphosis of a commodity.*⁴

Yet it is not 'impossible' (because inconsistent) as Meinongian objects are standardly assumed to be. It is real. It can be an object of scientific knowledge, given both a materialist epistemology and a non-standard logic, built on a classical logical foundation, but permitting specific and limited areas of inconsistency. Similarly the non-standard world of capitalism is a historically specific and limited world, articulated both with the standard world of nature and the standard worlds of pre- and post-capitalist modes of production. Knowledge of it requires a non-standard logic, with a specific object, and without any necessity that inconsistency must spread throughout the whole system and vitiate its fundamental rationality.

I introduce this digression, not simply because of its intrinsic interest, but because it is relevant to Timothy Clark's line of argument on Manet's *Olympia*. In fact, what Clark is saying, in varying forms, is that *Olympia* too is an inconsistent object. Like Meinong's 'round square' it is internally contradictory and logically inconsistent. In philosophy the standard moves here are those of Russell and Frege, followed by Strawson, whose views Clark implicitly follows when he claims that *Olympia* fails to refer, as he does a number of times. (In fact, he tends to claim that it fails to signify, but I don't think he distinguishes between signification and reference). Then, once inconsistency is admitted it proliferates to produce a new system, that of modernism, which is vitiated throughout, chaotic and doomed to insignificance. Worse still, this insignificance is embraced and justified.

Fundamentally, the problem is whether to accept or reject contradiction in the real, whether to categorise all inconsistencies as signs of cognitive dissonance or failure to signify, or possibly as reflections in knowledge of a contradictory reality. I should make it clear at this point, I think, that my argument is based on a correspondence theory of knowledge (which I assume I share with Timothy Clark) rather than any form of scepticism or pragmatism. It is not however an empiricism, since it posits the reality of unobservables. I should certainly add too that this view does not grant a general warrant to inconsistency; it admits only such inconsistencies as reflect a contradiction in the real. The importance of Rescher and Brandom's work is precisely that it shows that contradictions need not be diffused throughout a whole system. Their introduction can be specific and subject to the procedures of scientific enquiry.

In some respects, Timothy Clark's approach is similar to that of E H Gombrich in *Art and Illusion*, a classic on the topic of realism. Gombrich sees art in terms of a consistency-seeking system, in which a homogeneous space is constructed from a set of mutually reinforcing cues. Modernism, in this interpretation, is a system in which cues are inconsistent and the spectator is either compelled to oscillate interminably between two alternative readings (cubism=deadlock) or else is unable to reach a settled reading at all. Timothy Clark describes *Olympia* in very similar terms: 'stalemate' rather than 'deadlock' resulting from construction of the image 'in two inconsistent graphic modes'. The question which we might want to ask, but Timothy Clark rejects, is whether this inconsistency reflects a contradiction.

It is clear where the site of such a contradiction might be:

Two systems coexist: they describe aspects of the body, and point to aspects of that body's sexual identity, but they do not bring those aspects together into some single economy of form.

And later, commenting on the absence of back-lighting or colour separation in the painting of auburn hair against red-brown screen:

The face and hair cannot be fitted together because they do not obey the usual set of equations for sexual consistency, equations which tell us what bodies are like, how the world of bodies is divided, into male and female.

Timothy Clark explicitly relates the perceptual inconsistencies (line, lighting, colour) of the painting to the problem of sexual identity.

I confess I find it difficult to follow Timothy Clark's argument in all its substance, but it seems that the ideological 'manufacture' of sexual identity which he objects to, and believes the painting helps perpetuate, is that of an endless oscillation between a fantasy of the *femme fatale*, dominating and ruthless, and that of the *odalisque*, compliant, open and abject. A sado-masochistic fantasy in fact. The two graphic styles reflect these two fantasy positions for the woman: soft against hard, open against closed, indefinite against definite, inviting against resistant, yielding against ruthless. On the other hand, it seems sometimes that one of these positions may be more 'real' than the other; sometimes that one of them may be more 'male', as though the prostitute, as end-term and perhaps antinomy of 'Woman' (in the sexual discourse of the

Second Empire) may be transposed into the male, as in the psychoanalytic description of fetishism.

Personally I think an interpretation in terms of fetishism would be most appropriate. Certainly this too would make it relatively easy to explain, using Freud's arguments about disavowal in relation to fetishism, why the signs are not fixed, but oscillate between an avowed belief and a disavowed knowledge: the theatrical setting, the hair revealed and concealed, the toad-like hand, the hostile and aggressive cat. All this, in fact, despite its inconsistency, would be quite consistent with a placing of the spectator in a position of imaginary mastery and control. Fetishism is perhaps the classic instance of how incommensurable operations of the psyche can be sutured: contained, secured, stalemated.

V

It seems then that we must refine still further our concept of 'inconsistency'. Not only inconsistency justified by contradiction in the real, but two further categories: runaway inconsistency, of the kind Timothy Clark describes, and inconsistency contained, submitted to imaginary control. If the critics in 1865 could not occupy this position of mastery, which seems to me to be perfectly available now, it is not necessarily because *Olympia* could not be fitted into any discourse (radical inconsistency) but that it could not be fitted into their discourses then. As the 'sexual discourse' has changed historically so has the 'availability' of *Olympia*. The place allotted women publicly ('fully coded and familiar' in Timothy Clark's phrase) has become a fetishised place. Manet's relationship to Freud is not unlike Carlyle's to Marx and Engels.

There is a passage in Timothy Clark's essay where he imagines a picture in which 'the production of the sexual subject' would be depicted 'in a particular class formation'. This is indeed the picture (if it is a picture, rather than some more complex form of art) which it is important to think about. Within my terms, this is a picture which is about, not 'Woman', but the production of woman as fetish in a particular conjuncture of capitalism and patriarchy. (I think it's important to introduce the concept of patriarchy, because I don't think the production of the sexual subject can be attributed simply to mechanisms which are the object of marxism or, in its classical form, psychoanalysis.)

Such a picture would not 'identify' 'Woman' or any particular woman but would confront the underlying mechanisms which produce the sexual discourse within which women are placed.

Consequently, when Timothy Clark asks, 'Do dis-identificatory practices *matter*?' the answer must be 'Yes'. They matter because without dis-identificatory practices, we would be trapped in 'the dance of ideology', there would be no caesura in the 'constant re-engagement' of ourselves and others, reflex-categories which sustain our common misrecognition. This caesura, this break, would not magically reveal our 'real' selves, but it would enable us to see the mechanisms which sustain this confrontation, this antithetic reality misrecognised as evident and uniform.

Nor can we find an unproblematic point of identification in any set of alternative meanings already produced as counter-meanings by the exploited and oppressed, women and the working-class. Or, at least, the forms of art which achieved identification of this sort would not have any explanatory content, would not be able to show how these alternative terms and images stood in relation to the mechanisms of the society which strove to suppress them and yet continued to be threatened by them.

Brecht described many times why a traditional form of realism was inadequate as the sole or privileged form of oppositional art. On a purely descriptive level it tended to be local rather than global, and to show what was present simultaneously rather than past and future. It favoured the actual rather than the possible and the observable rather than the unobservable. It was descriptive rather than explanatory. It effaced contradiction. It could not cope with the depiction of uneven development or over-determination. For this battery of reasons he tried to develop an art on the basis of a montage of discourses, dealing separately and in different manners with different areas and levels of reality. He also believed that the task of changing the structures of ideology (and society) was a common task, to be finished together by artist and spectator. He therefore preferred open to closed works. He believed that popular forms and conceptions should be used but also suspected.

Clearly there isn't any straight line from Manet to Brecht and in fact there are a great many obvious differences between them, the preconceptions they worked with and their aesthetic and political aims and ambitions. Nonetheless Brecht could be seen as part of the paradigm of modernism perhaps more easily than as part of an alternative paradigm of Realism. It depends partly on where you place the lines of demarcation. If you are thinking in terms of the mainstream tradition of modernism, its development into a new academy, the vacuous modernism enshrined in the Museum of Modern Art, New York, or by Greenberg, for instance, I can see the value of stressing class content in art and the consequent polemical

value of the return to Courbet and Realism. But in fact Timothy Clark isn't thinking in those terms: his main aesthetic critique is of writing, associated with *Screen*, which, whatever its faults, is committed to a radical art. In this context, the invocation of Realism means something else, it recapitulates the debates of the 1920s and 1930s, surely not to be settled in favour of Lukács and Zhdanov rather than Brecht and LEF?

VI

Writing about Brecht, Raymond Williams likes to stress the concept of 'complex seeing' which Brecht uses to describe the kind of seeing demanded of a spectator who must both watch dramatic action on the stage and read written texts on an adjacent screen. Raymond Williams generalises this specific use of the term into an altogether broader category, associated more with Brecht's ideas about the demonstration of the effects of alternative courses of action ('modal theatre', so to speak). 'Complex seeing', in this sense, simply involves a multiplicity of semiotic practices, formal devices and points-of-view, distinguishing, for example, the representation of plot from the representation of commentary, or narration of past events from hypotheses about future events, documentary from fiction, and so on. This kind of multiplicity is not necessarily 'inconsistent' at all, but there is a tendency, I feel, for Timothy Clark to elide the differences, to mistake a call for consistency as a call for uniformity and homogeneity.

In fact, the history of art since the Renaissance until the modern period, had been one of homogenisation: the exclusion of words from the picture-space, the restriction of point-of-view spatially and temporally (homogeneous space and single moment in time), the banishing of discontinuity. The result, I think, was an art dedicated ultimately to visual perception, a primarily 'retinal' art, in Duchamp's term. By breaking with this tradition the avant-garde has vastly increased the scope of art. Frankly I find it very hard to envisage a 'political' art existing within the Renaissance system, except perhaps as a parody of Christian art, with an alternative hagiography, which would be worse than no political art at all. Part of the importance of the turn to popular and Third World art, which underlay the break with the Renaissance, was precisely its iconic, conceptual and diegetic flexibility, its toleration of discontinuity and multiplicity.

I don't think the place Timothy Clark wants for art is necessarily very different from the place I would want. But I think the struggle

(the politics of aesthetics and art) is one that must be fought on the terrain of modernism, the struggle to sustain and build the popularity of the radical avant-garde, as well as the terrain of popular art, 'fighting for room' there too, the struggle to destroy another kind of 'popularity'. It seems to me that Timothy Clark goes beyond critique of *Olympia* (a critique of its fetishistic structures, for instance) to an attempt to undermine the whole paradigm of modernism and, specifically, the aesthetics of its radical avant-garde sector. This surely is to turn one's back on the whole history of political art in this century — the century not of 1848 but of 1917 and, more immediately relevant to us, 1968 — our 1848, so to speak. Perhaps the 1980s, now that academic modernism is seen to be crumbling, will produce a new breakthrough in art, comparable in its way to that heralded by *Olympia* in 1865, one that will bring us closer to the art we want. But if so, I don't expect it to be greeted with 'care and comprehension' by the critics who are our contemporaries, any more than Manet's was. And I don't see that their care and comprehension *matters*. Manet's progeny, after all, changed the history of art, just as (well, not *just as*) Marx's changed the history of the world.

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THE SUBJECT OF FEMINIST FILM THEORY / PRACTICE

The major focus of the discussions at the Feminism and Cinema Event held at the 1979 Edinburgh Film Festival turned on the terms in which we could talk about the emergence of a 'feminist film culture' within the present conjuncture. Throughout the week emphasis was placed on the need to locate feminist politics within a conception of film as a social practice, on the dialectic of making and viewing and on film as process rather than object. The aim of the event was to bring together film-makers, film theorists and women involved in distribution and exhibition, and through the papers, forums and workshops, to generate discussion and analysis of the conditions of existence of each of these practices, their forms and their relation to each other. The event provided a useful starting point for developing a new space in which the transformation of the relationship between production, distribution, exhibition and criticism could be worked through and from which strategies could be forged.

In re-defining cinema as social practice the central question which had

to be addressed was that of political effectivity. In her paper (and in the article on which it is based ¹) Christine Gledhill identified a number of key problems for feminist film theory which I would like to take up and explore here. Firstly, she argued that, so far, work on subjectivity and the text has ignored the crucial question of the audience as constituted socially, outside the text, in different sets of social relations. She criticised the emphasis on the individual reader, on the place of the subject in the text and positionality in language at the expense of attention to historical and social processes and to a concept of the subject in history — the extra-textual. Secondly, she raised the equally important question of the need to assess the power and role of recognition and identification as political strategies in feminist film practice. These problems seem to me to be the most urgent theoretical questions we have to address at the present time if we see ourselves as seriously engaged in

¹ Christine Gledhill 'Recent Developments in Feminist Film Criticism', *Quarterly Review of Film Studies* vol 3 no 4.

28 ideological struggle rather than in the cosy business of providing cultural enlightenment from the margins of academia. Indeed, the process of addressing such problems points to the need to formulate a new project for theory as a practice which aims to transform the way in which film is perceived and used and which accounts for the ways in which other practices determine the production of theory itself.

The struggle in the women's movement to establish theoretical work as a valid enterprise has been an important one. In fact, it could be argued that, at least in this country, theory has always been present in the politics of feminism, since the question of how to combine theory and politics has always been a subject of debate. In this sense, theory and politics have not been seen as two separate realms. The relationship between theory and practice has posed itself acutely for the women's movement because one of the projects of the movement is to construct knowledge of the nature and causes of women's oppression in order to devise strategies for social transformation. Indeed, this is the point of any theoretical work. In this context it is important to make a distinction between theory and theoreticism. Theoreticism assumes the autonomy of theory as a discourse and tends to have its operation within certain institutional practices (eg academia), and a mode of address which produces the theoretician as the authoritative source of knowledge. It poses itself as a discourse of mastery and anything which falls outside the realm of the discourse — the real (in the Lacanian sense of the constant limit of the subject's 'reality') — is decreed to be unavailable for knowledge. I would suggest that the

process involved in the production of theory could be seen as analogous to the Lacanian notion of desire: an endless and dialectical discursive activity, embedded in the real, and always exceeded and transformed by practice — a constant dialectic with the aim of breaking of exchange for *use*. In this sense, I would argue that the reason why the problems Christine Gledhill raised have not been seriously addressed until now has to do with the necessary disjuncture between theory and practice as much as it does to the institutional sources of much theoretical work.

However, we are now at a stage when it is becoming possible to theorise a conception of ideological struggle within feminist film theory and practice more concretely and to ignore these problems at this point could constitute a move towards theoreticism. Indeed what is most useful about an event like the Feminism and Cinema Event is that it helps us to understand more fully the ways in which cultural practices themselves determine the production of theory and to see more clearly the danger of seeing a film text as having a specific effectivity regardless of the context in which it is being viewed. I would argue that while the emphasis on textual analysis in feminist film criticism has been productive, and while strategic work of this kind (particularly on the specificity of the relations of subjectivity set up in different genres) still remains important, theoretical work on the relationship between text and subject and the historical conjuncture is now more important. This paper, then, is a tentative outline for such a project.

The importance of the work within the field of semiotics and

psychoanalysis for feminist film theory had been twofold. First it has laid emphasis on the activity of reading films, of seeing film as a textual practice rather than an autonomous object of study or consumption, so that the effectivity of a film has to be seen as a function both of the mode of reading and of the text itself. Secondly, work on text/subject relations has established that a transformation of the relationship between text and viewer is a prerequisite for political work on cinema as an institution. It has therefore opened up a way of seeing film practice as a practice of meaning-production involving both film-maker and film viewer in a dialectical relationship — as a *social practice*. In her paper, Christine Gledhill pointed to what she considered to be the 'negativeness' and 'prescriptive, anti-realist' stance of some of this work, in particular the article by Pam Cook and myself on Raoul Walsh's *The Revolt of Mamie Stover*.² The point she missed, I think, is that that work was an intervention at a particular historical moment within feminist film theory, an appropriation of psychoanalysis for feminism at a time when work which had been undertaken in the field (eg Metz's 'The Imaginary Signifier') had failed to address questions of sexual difference in relation to the cinematic apparatus. The major point of disagreement I have with her critique is her rejection of psychoanalysis as at all useful in helping us to grasp more concretely some key problems for feminist film theory. It is not that psychoanalysis provides ready answers or that there are no limits to the theory. As Stephen Heath has pointed out,³ the Lacanian notion of the phallus as essence in nature, and castration as a scenario of vision, constitute decisive

limits to the theory which foreclose questions of social and political transformation. Nevertheless, feminist readings of this kind of the classic realist text, I would argue, were a necessary starting point for feminist film theory and practice, because they revealed how the economy of the classic realist text works towards the unquestioned imaginary of the patriarchal order.

Clearly, however, work on text/subject relations which aims to transform the relationship between text and viewer cannot be seen as a goal in itself, not is that work alone able to answer political questions about cinema as an institution. As Paul Willemen has pointed out,⁴ the danger is that it can indeed become a prescriptive and essentialist dogma,

a strategy of attack against all imaginary unity as such, thus condemning itself to a romantic, anarchist project of eternal and universal subversion/transgression.

I would argue that any political project such as feminism, while it must contain and preserve a heterogeneity of social practices, must at the same time, involve a *form of imaginary unity* for it to be at all effective. The struggle to maintain the women's movement as an autonomous movement around a network system and a platform of political demands for social change bears witness to this. As Christine

2 Pam Cook and Claire Johnston 'The Place of Women in the Cinema of Raoul Walsh', in *Raoul Walsh*, Phil Hardy (ed), Edinburgh Film Festival, 1974.

3 For a critique of Lacanian psychoanalysis and sexual difference see Stephen Heath 'Difference', *Screen* vol 19 no 3, Autumn 1974.

4 Paul Willemen 'Notes on Subjectivity' *Screen* vol 19 no 1 Spring 1978.

30 Gledhill suggested, recognition and identification at some level are vital for political effectivity in feminist film practice.

Any theory of ideological struggle, therefore, in relation to feminist film theory and practice must engage with both aspects of this problematic at the same time in a dialectical movement. This would involve a move away from work on subjectivity which concentrates exclusively on the notion of subject production and on the text with its inscribed reader/author and towards the more complex question of subjectivity seen in historical and social terms. In this way, feminist film practice can no longer be seen simply in terms of the effectivity of a system of representation, but rather as a production of and by subjects already in social practices which always involve heterogeneous and often contradictory positions in ideologies. In other words, feminist film practice is determined by

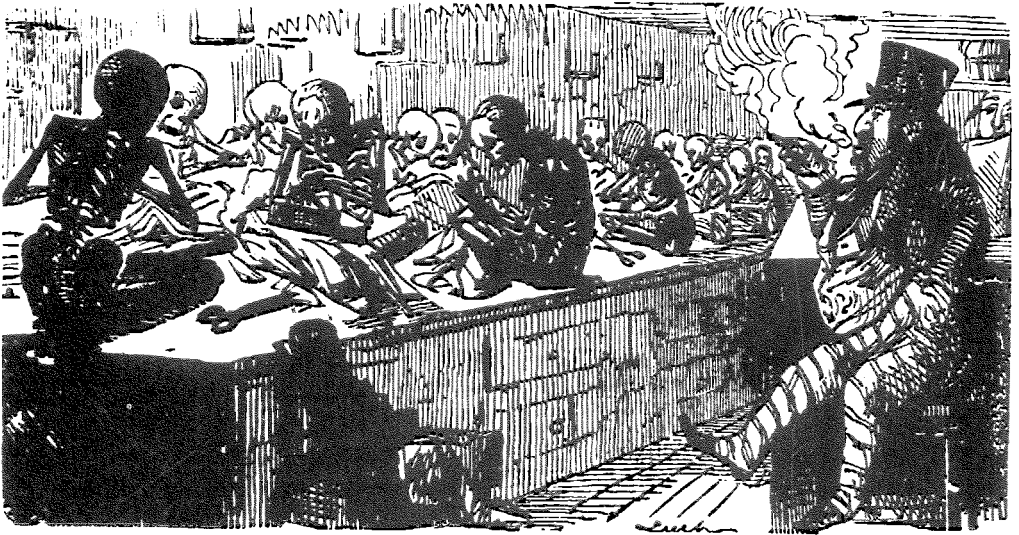
the conjuncture of discursive, economic and political practices which produce subjects in history. As Stuart Hall and others have argued,

The proposition that ideology is grounded entirely through the inscription of subject positions, through discursive practices which are wholly autonomous, which have neither determinacy in, articulation with nor pertinent specific effects for other levels of the social formation, is difficult to found within a problematic which at the same time declares itself to be marxist.⁵

The notion of the 'reader' is a purely theoretical construct. Real readers are subjects in history rather than mere subjects of a single text.⁶ As those of

5 Stuart Hall and others 'Marxism and Culture' *Screen* vol 18 no 4 Winter 1977/8.

6 Paul Willemsen, op cit.



Bubbles of the Year – Cheap Clothing

Song of the Shirt

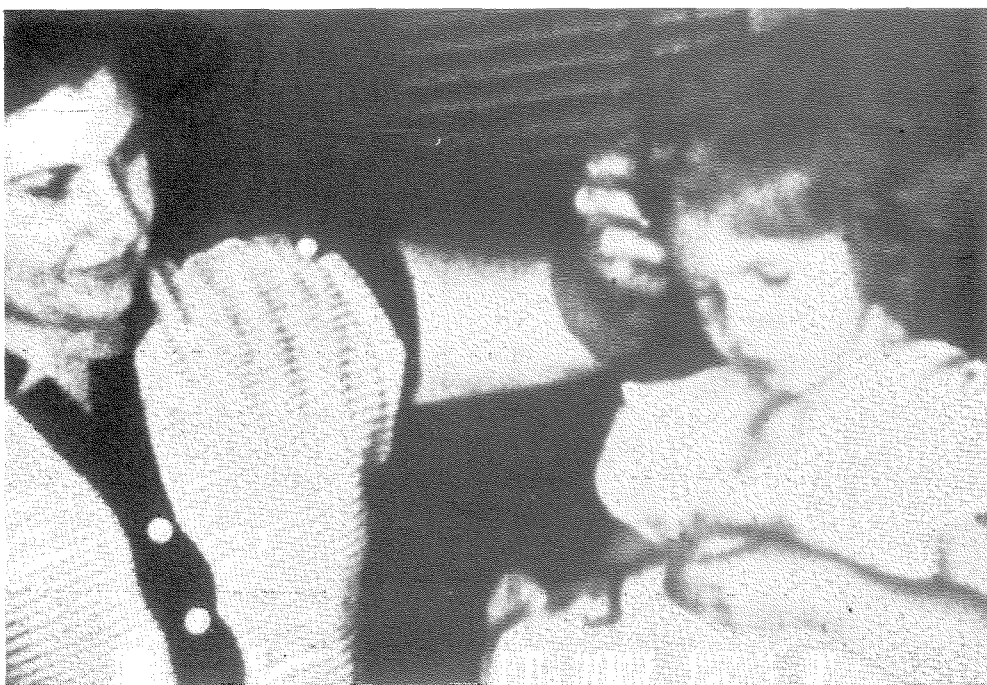


Song of the Shirt

us who have worked with audiences know, this has proved an important problem in relation to the development of an oppositional practice involving the transformation of the relations of production, distribution, exhibition and criticism. Films are read unpredictably and can be pulled into a variety of ideological spaces and mobilised for diverse projects. Textual strategies have thus to be posed in conjunctural terms. The problem must be thought in terms of which set of discourses the text encounters and how this encounter may restructure the productivity of the text and the discourses with which it combines to form an inter-textual field in ideology and history. Hence the importance of a film such as *The Song of the Shirt* (1979) which takes as its problematic precisely such an intervention in institutions and historical discourses, with the aim of activating contradictions within sets of

discourses. In the film, which is set in the 1830s and '40s, Jonathan Curling and Sue Clayton interrogate the way in which the history of a group of women workers, the 'distressed needlewomen', was constructed through the juxtaposing of different means of representation — government commissions, newspaper reports, lithographs, novels, music — making use of the conventions of cinema and TV history in order to deconstruct their operations by the use of montage. In so doing, the film not only questions its own process of construction, but also offers an investigation into historical modes of representation and the process of writing history itself.

An important point which emerges from these questions is that particular practices in the social formation should not be treated in isolation and designated as essentially 'reactionary' or 'progressive' once and for all. Their



Daughter Rite

34 political function and effectivity will depend on the socio-historical conjuncture and the conditions of existence of each practice — that is to say, which discourses and practices are being displaced and to what effect? The textual strategies of films like Jan Worth's *Taking Apart* (1979) or Michelle Citron's *Daughter Rite* (1979) which depend on identification processes and realism can only be assessed in these terms. Jan Worth's study of two prostitutes is at one level a documentary which mobilises identification processes but at the same time calls into question the notion that the way to understand the two women's oppression is to simply film them re-telling their lived experience. The women read their interviews from a notebook in selected settings, which achieve a re-situating of identification processes for the viewer. *Daughter Rite*, on the other hand, poses within itself the history of the forms within feminist film practice as it has developed (from *cinéma-verité* to experimental film) and mobilises this juxtaposition to question the dominance of documentary in feminist film practice now.

Conjunctural analysis, therefore, calls for a re-definition of the problem of subjectivity which, while accounting for inter-subjective relations, at the same time offers an analysis of discourse which includes a consideration of ideological representations in relation to and in context of the political and the economic in the social formation — a

following through of the implications of cinema as a social practice. The stress that semiotics and psycho-analysis has placed on film as a language, as a specific signifying practice, is crucial because it poses film as a process, a discourse which simultaneously puts into place an 'I' and a 'you'. But as I have argued, there is also an outside of discourse which has an effectivity and which must be taken into consideration if a productive strategy for ideological struggle in relation to feminist film theory and practice is to be developed. If institutions are an important site of struggle for feminism, I would agree with feminist critics⁷ who have argued that women's art which poses itself as 'other', as negativity, as essentially feminine — a cultural feminism which is unified, non-contradictory and exclusive — could be seen as no longer a threat to the institutions of art and could be a way in which male dominance in art can be maintained. Feminist art, on the other hand, which asserts a woman's discourse about her position and the inter-subjective relationships which constitute her as female subject in history, is far more problematic and far less easily assimilated into the conception of women as irrevocable 'other' by which patriarchy is maintained.

⁷ For example, Griselda Pollock, 'Feminism, Femininity and the Hayward Annual Exhibition 1978' in *Feminist Review* no 2 1979.

**JUDITH BARRY,
SANDY FLITTERMAN**

TEXTUAL STRATEGIES: THE POLITICS OF ART-MAKING

IN ORDER TO develop a feminist artistic practice that works, towards productive social change, it is necessary to understand representation as a political issue and to have an analysis of women's subordination within patriarchal forms of representation. This article emerges from the need for a feminist re-examination of the notions of art, politics, and the relations between them, an evaluation which must take into account how 'femininity' itself is a social construct. We have come together, a feminist film theorist and a feminist artist, to discuss these issues, and more specifically to consider the limitations of current definitions of art as a political activity.

Initially in the women's movement feminists emphasised the importance of giving voice to personal experiences; the expression and documentation of women's oppression as well as their aspirations provided women's art with a liberating force. However, a radical reconceptualisation of the personal to include more broadly social and even unconscious forces has made a more analytical approach to these personal experiences necessary. The experiential must be taken beyond consciously felt and articulated needs of women if a real transformation of the *structures of* women's oppression is to occur.

While we recognise the value of certain forms of radical political art, concerned to highlight feminist issues generally submerged by dominant cultural discourse, this kind of work, if untheorised, can only have limited results. More militant forms of feminist art such as agit-prop, body-art, and ritualised violence, can produce immediate results by allowing the expression of rage, for example,

1 An initial formulation of these categories has been made by Laura Mulvey in an interview in *Wedge*, no 2, Spring 1978.

or by focusing on a particular event or aspect of women's oppression. But these results may be shortlived. A more theoretically informed art can contribute to enduring changes by addressing itself to structural and deep-seated causes of women's oppression rather than to its effects. A radical feminist art would include an understanding of how women are constituted through social practices in culture; once this is understood it would be possible to create an aesthetics designed to subvert the production of 'woman' as commodity. We see a need for theory that goes beyond the personal into the questions of ideology, culture, and the production of meaning.

To understand better the point at which theory and art intersect it might be useful to consider women's cultural production in four categories.¹ Our attempt here is to describe a typology rather than criticise these positions for their shortcomings. In evaluating these types of women's art, our reference point will be the recognition of the need for a theory of cultural production. When we talk about culturally constructed meaning we are referring to a system of heterogeneous interacting codes. The meaning we derive from any interaction is dependent on our knowledge of a set of conventions affecting every aspect of our lives, from the food we eat to the art we like. Every act (eating an orange, building a table, reading a book) is a social act; the fundamentally human is social. Theory both enables us to recognise this and permits us to go beyond individual, personally liberating solutions to a *socially* liberated situation. The culture of any society will impose a certain selection or priority of meaning upon the multiplicity of meanings inherent in a given situation creating an apparently given and enduring ensemble. A theoretical approach, systematically considering the range of cultural phenomena, can produce the means for examining the political effectiveness of feminist art work.

Each of the four categories in our typology of women's art-making implies a specific strategy. Through examination of each of the categories we can ascertain the assumptions that characterise these relations. From doing this it should be clear that sets of assumptions do not constitute a theory, although they may be sufficient to establish a particular type of artistic practice. When we speak of the political in discussing art work we must ask the question, 'Action, by whom, and for what purpose?' Each of the four categories will propose different answers to these questions, because they each have different goals and strategies.

I

One type of women's art can be seen as the glorification of an essential female power. This power is viewed as an inherent feminine artistic essence which could find expression if allowed to be explored freely. This is an essentialist position because it is based on the belief in a female essence residing somewhere in the body of women. It can be found in the emphasis on 'vaginal' forms in painting and sculpture; it is sometimes associated with mysticism, ritual and the idea of a female mythology. It is possible to see this type of art which valorises the body as reversing the traditional Western hierarchy of mind over matter. This form of art could be seen as an aesthetics of simple inversion. Feminist essentialism in art simply reverses the terms of dominance and subordination. Instead of the male supremacy of patriarchal culture, the female (the essential feminine) is elevated to primary status.

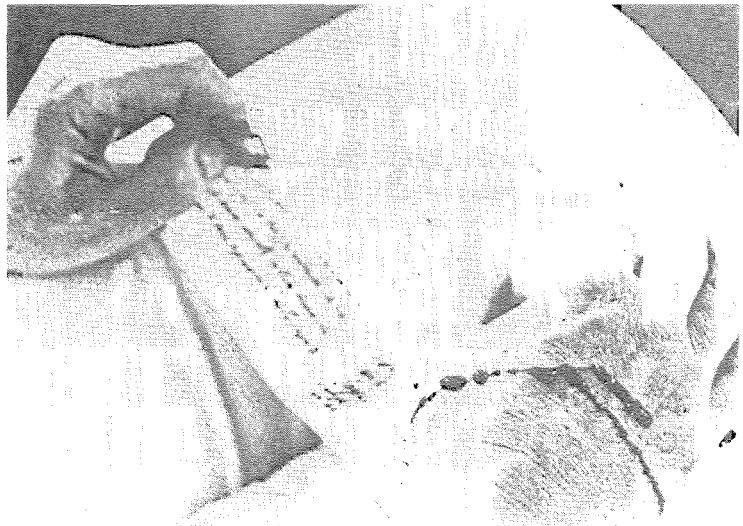
Much of the art work in this category has as its aim the encouragement of women's self-esteem through valorisation of female experiences and bodily processes. This art seeks to reinforce satisfaction in being a woman in a culture that does the opposite. By glorifying the bodies of women in art work, an identificatory process is set up so that the receivers of the art work (the women for whom the work is intended) will validate their own femaleness. This type of art work is sometimes concerned to redefine motherhood as the seat of female creativity. In a society which isolates women and inspires competition it seeks to encourage solidarity amongst women through emotional appeal, ritual form, and synaesthetic effects in performance.

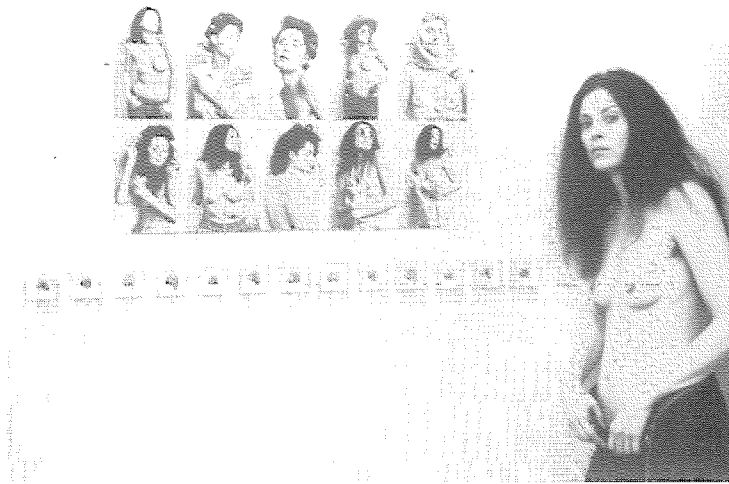
One such example is the work of Gina Pane, the French body artist whose performances for the last ten years have involved self-mutiliation and the ritualised drawing of her own blood. She defines the incision of her face with a razor blade in one performance as a 'transgression of the taboo of the sore through which the body is opened, and of the canons of feminine beauty'. At least one critic has praised her work because it 'privileges the signifier on the side of pain'. Complications arise, however, when the assumptions underlying this type of art are examined. To counterpose an aesthetics of pain to the assumed pleasurable discourse of dominant artistic practice, already accepts as given a pleasure/pain dichotomy. By confronting one half of the dichotomy with its opposite, Pane's work offers an act of artistic contestation, but within the dualistic tradition of Western metaphysics.

By elevating pain to the status of an oppositional artistic force, it would seem that Pane is simply reinforcing a traditional cliché about women. Even if women are assumed to be outside the patriarchal discourse, would the first rumble of self-expression take the form of pain or self-mutilation? Pane's comments about her work seem to indicate that she feels that in wounding herself she is wounding society. However, because her wounds exist in an art context, they are easily absorbed into an artworld notion of pain as beautiful. The solidarity in suffering that this work seems to want to promote is actually a form of solidarity that has been imposed on women for centuries. It is bondage rather than bonding.

Hannah Wilke, an artist based in New York, adopts a related strategy of body art in creating an art work that has as its aim 'that women allow their feelings and fantasies to emerge, so that this could lead to a new type of art'.² In her 'SOS Starification Object Series' (1975) she says, 'I am my art. My art becomes me.' She sets up an equivalency between her body's poses and its alteration after vaginally shaped pieces of chewing gum are attached to the exposed areas on the one hand, and language, where the meaning of a word or series of words is transformed by a slight change or modification in the letters composing it, on the other. Scarification becomes starification. Wilke explains 'my art is seduction'. Often her poses take on the characteristics of a centrefold, her eyes directed to the assumed male spectator of nude paintings and *Playboy* magazine. In *Ways of Seeing*, John Berger points out 'Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. The

Gina Pane *Psychic Action*, 1974





Hannah Wilke with
S O S Starification
Object Series 1975

surveyor of the woman in herself is male; the surveyed female. Thus, she turns herself into an object.' In objectifying herself as she does, in assuming the conventions associated with a stripper (as someone who will reveal all), Wilke seems to be teasing us as to her motives. She is both the stripper and the stripped bare. She does not make her own position clear; is her art work enticing critique or titillating enticement? It seems her work ends up by reinforcing what it intends to subvert. In using her own body as the content of her art, in calling her art 'seduction', she complicates the issues and fails to challenge conventional notions of female sexuality. Consequently it permits statements like the following from male critics: 'By manipulating the image of a sex kitten (female sex object), Wilke manages to avoid being trapped by it without having to deny her own beauty to achieve liberation.'

Wilke's and Pane's work represent two, very divergent, types of women's art in our first category. Yet they enable us to draw some conclusions about this type of art-making. Because this kind of art has no theory of the representations of women, it presents images of women as unproblematic. It does not take into account the social contradictions involved in 'femininity'. In much of this art, women are proposed as the bearers of culture, albeit an alternative one. In this way what is assumed to be a progressive position is actually retrograde. Being-a-woman is the essential presupposition underlying this art work: what this notion entails is assumed to be generally accepted, uncontradictory, and immutable. Whether the art focuses on pain (immolation) or pleasure (eroticism), it does not challenge a fixed and rigid category of 'femininity'.

II

A second strategy in feminist artistic practice views women's art as a form of sub-cultural resistance. It presents a kind of artisanal work, often overlooked in dominant systems of representation, as the 'unsung province' of women's art activity. An example of this type of work is the valorisation of crafts, such as patch-work quilts, and the activities of women in the home. It proposes the development of a feminist counter-tradition in the arts, reconstructing a 'hidden history' of female productivity. This strategy has the effect of stimulating women's creativity to discover new areas of expression. By redefining art to include crafts and previously neglected skills, it avoids the ideological distinction between 'high' and 'low' cultural forms. In so doing, it emphasises that this patriarchal distinction that has served to restrict creative avenues for women.

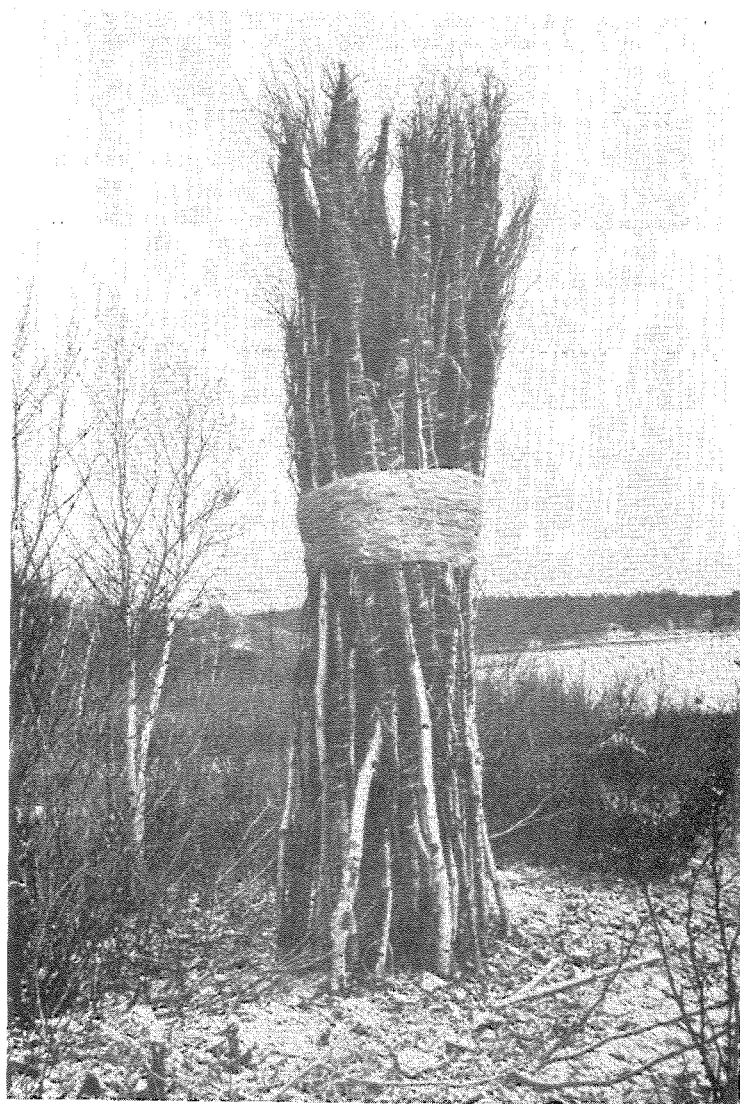
However, this is also an essentialist position in as much as it views women as having an inherent creativity that simply goes unrecognised by mainstream culture. It therefore has limited ability to transform the structural conditions which both produce definitions of 'art' and oppress women. This is not to say that this kind of art-making is unimportant, but simply to point out the limitations of an untheorised strategy.

Although Jackie Winsor is not usually considered a feminist artist, she does fit into our second category of women's art, and in fact at least one critic considered her a feminist artist when she first came to national attention in 1970-71. Her constructions of wood, hemp and other 'natural' materials convey a post-minimal fascination with geometric forms and the imposition of order and regularity. While she lists her concerns as repetition, weightiness, and density, there is in her work-process itself careful attention to craft-like details, particularly in the spinning-like monotony of some of the hemp and wood pieces and even of the actual carpentry itself. In *From the Center*,³ Lucy Lippard characterises her work in the following way:

Repetition in Winsor's work refers not to form, but to process, that is, to the repetition of single-unit materials which finally make up a unified, single form after being subjected to the process of repeatedly unravelling, then to the process of repeatedly binding or to the process of repeatedly nailing into wood or to the process of repeatedly sticking bricks in cement or to the process of repeatedly gouging out tracks in plywood.

³ Lucy Lippard, *From the Center*, New York 1976, p 203.

Jackie Winsor's work is considered much 'tougher' than the



Jackie Winsor *30 to 1*
Bound Trees, 1971

work of other women who one might place in this category, for example the 'pattern painters' such as Harmony Hammond. Winsor's work includes skills such as carpentry usually reserved for men. Discussing her work Winsor often ties the origin of a particular sculpture to an early childhood experience, as in 'Nail Piece'. When she was a child, her father planned a house which her mother built while he was away at work. At one point, says Winsor,

My father gave me an enormous bag of nails and left, saying to nail them down to keep the wood in place. I did ... and used the whole

bag of nails to do it. The part he told me to nail down needed about a pound of nails. I think I put in about twelve pounds. My father had a fit because I'd used up all his nails. They made such a fuss about it that it left quite an impression on me.

But like much traditional women's work, Winsor's pieces conceal the actual labour involved in their construction.

One might parallel Winsor's work and women's craft work in quilts or baskets, for instance. Patriarchal culture traditionally functions to negate the complexity of work involved in such traditional handiwork. By foregrounding this 'other' of conventional high art, the art work that falls into our second category emphasises that there is another art, which has a history, and which has been repressed. The 'alternative tradition' approach emphasises the social and functional aspects of activities such as weaving or pottery-making in communities. We agree that this type of contribution to feminist art-making is an important one; however it is equally important to point out the limitations of a form of self-contained subcultural resistance, one which does not work in a dialectical relation with the dominant male culture. A possible consequence is the ghettoisation of women's art in an alternative tradition.

III

Our third category of women's art derives also from this aspect of potential isolationism. It views the dominant cultural order as a monolithic construction in which women's cultural activity is either submerged or placed entirely outside its limits. This position can be regarded as an antidote to feminist essentialism in that it recognises that what has traditionally been known as the 'form' and the 'content' of culture both carry meaning. However, ironically, it is also the basis of *both* 'separatist' (artists who do not identify with the artworld) and non-feminist (women artists who maintain that they are people who 'happen' to be women) discussion. Thus this category includes two groups of women at opposite ideological poles. The strategy of the first group is to establish their own society, so women will be able to combat the patriarchy. However, it fails to theorise how women are produced as a category within the social complex, or how femininity is a social construction.

The example of Los Angeles artist Terry Wolverton presents both the advantages and the limitations of the separatist strategy. As co-director of the Lesbian Art Project (which provides a programme of Sapphic Education) and producer-co-director of a

feminist science fiction theatre. Wolverton's art work is informed with the desire to shape an alternative female culture. This takes the form of validating craft projects such as bread-dough sculptures and costumed happenings because they are produced by lesbians in the community. One positive consequence is that this type of art allows women to explore their feelings and attitudes, enabling them to develop self-esteem and pride in the discovery of their love and trust for one another. The productive result is an attack on the destructive dissatisfaction with being a woman that patriarchal culture fosters. However, the separatist position seems to be an example of this self-validation gone awry: the very notion of positive (lesbian) images of women relies on the already constituted meaning of 'woman'. Again, this unproblematic notion of 'femaleness' does not take into account that meaning is a dialectical process which involves an interaction between images and viewers. By failing to theorise how this meaning is produced within the social complex, this art considers the notion of femininity as unproblematic and positions women's culture as separate and different from mainstream culture. This can produce very disturbing results, as in the case of some of the art work validated by Wolverton, in which the prominence given to the exposed breasts of the subjects of the art work is strikingly similar to that in the photography of Les Krims, an artist noted for his particularly virulent expressions of misogyny.

The second group of women within our third category cannot be said to have a feminist strategy because they do not view themselves as artists engaged in the feminist struggle. Women who have been favoured through more strident forms of careerism make the assertion that women's art has outgrown its need for feminism. For these women, feminism is no longer useful, primarily because it is seen as a means to an end. Artists falling into this category, such as Rosalyn Drexler ('I don't object to being called a woman artist as long as the word woman isn't used to define the kind of art I create') and Elaine de Kooning ('We're artists who happen to be women or men among other things we happen to be — tall, short, blonde, dark, mesomorph, ectomorph, black, Spanish, German, Irish, hot-tempered, easy-going — that are in no way relevant to our being artists')⁴ simply deny that their work is embedded in a social context, or that art-making is a form of social practice.

⁴ *Art and Sexual Politics: Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?* edited by Thomas Hess & Elizabeth C Baker, Collier, New York 1973, both quotes from p 57.

IV

A final type of artistic practice situates women at a crucial place in patriarchy which enables them to play on the contradictions within it. This position regards artistic activity as a *textual* practice which exploits existing social contradictions. This position intersects with other social practices foregrounding many of the issues involved in the representation of women. In these works the image of women is not accepted as an already produced given, but is constructed in and through the work itself. This has the result of emphasising that meanings are socially constructed and demonstrates the importance and function of discourse in the shaping of social reality.

In discussing our fourth category of feminist art-making, we can clarify the issue of theory by underlining the difference between women making art in a male-dominated society and feminist art working against patriarchy. Activism in itself in women's art has limited effects because it does not examine the representation of women in culture or the production of women as a social category. We are suggesting that a feminist art evolves from a theoretical reflection on representations: how the representation of women is produced, the way it is understood, and the social conditions in which it is situated. In addition to specific artistic practices that fall into this category we should point out that important critical work is being done in theoretical journals such as *m/f*, *Camera Obscura*, and *Discourse* all of which contain articles analysing cultural production from a feminist perspective.

In 'Post-Partum Document' Mary Kelly deconstructs the assumed unity of the mother/child dyad in order to articulate the mother's fantasies of possession and loss. By mapping the exploration of psychic processes, she indicates the ways in which motherhood is constructed rather than biologically given. One section ('Documentation III'), displayed in a series of transparent boxes, is a record of 'conversations' between mother and son at the point when the child is leaving the family to enter school. Each box contains a drawing done by the child, remarks by the child, the mother's reaction, and the mother's diary. This information is supplemented by a Lacanian psychoanalytic text describing the constitution of the mother's subjectivity under 'motherhood' (patriarchy). This method allows the spectator to construct several positions simultaneously.

In a September 1976 press release Mary Kelly described her work in the following way:

Rosler's bound volume of three post-card novels is entitled 'Service: A Trilogy on Colonization'. Each novel, 'A Budding Gourmet' (about a middle class housewife who takes a gourmet cooking class because she feels 'it will enhance [her] as a human being'), 'McTowers Maid' (about a woman employee who organises the workers in a fast-food chain), and 'Tijuana Maid' (about a Mexican woman who comes to San Diego to work as a maid in a middle class household — the novel is in Spanish with the translation appended in the trilogy), deals with women and food in relation to issues of class, sex, and race. Originally Rosler sent these food novels through the mail as postcard series, one card about every five to seven days. As she makes clear in an introductory note in the trilogy, the spectator or reader of an art work is an integral part of the part of the piece itself.

Mail both is and isn't a personal communication. But whether welcome or unwelcome it thrusts itself upon you, so to speak, and must be dealt with in the context of your own life. Its immediacy may allow its message to penetrate the usual bounds of your attention. A serial communication can hook you, engaging your long-term interest (intermittently, at least). There was a lot of time — and mental space — around each instalment of these novels, time in which the communication could unfold and reverberate. So they are long novels, and slow ones.

When various representations are placed in a crisis in a work of art, the work has a fissuring effect, exposing the elements that embody its construction. This is important to Judith Barry (our third example of art work in this category)

in considering how women are represented by art, particularly in performance art where diverse conventions/disciplines intersect making possible a natural dialogue within these cultural conventions.

In 'Past Present Future Tense' woman's position as icon is juxtaposed to a disparate psychological and social narrative detailing the question of women as subject. The format of this piece calls into question the assumption of a unified 'ego' of the woman, making apparent her heterogeneity. 'See How To Be An American Woman' situates feminist social theory clichés informing seven horror stories of women's existence, via a pre-recorded multi-track (rape, childbirth, abortion, marriage, divorce, old age, etc) against the naked, immobilised body of a woman in an Italian arcade and museum. Several dualities are telescoped:

PEANUT BUTTER & JELLY SANDWICH

Butter 2 slices of bread. Spread one slice generously with peanut butter and top with a layer of jelly. Cover with remaining slice of bread; cut in half. Serve with a large glass of milk for a hearty lunch.

EMPAREDADO DE JALEA Y MANTEQUILLA DE CACAHUATE

Unte de mantequilla 2 rebanadas de pan. Unte generosamente 1 rebanada con mantequilla de cacahuate y luego con la jalea. Cúbrela con la otra rebanada de pan y corte a la mitad (diagonal). Sirva con un vaso grande de leche.

El libro contiene una lista de frases en inglés y en español:

Sweep the kitchen floor.

scrub

wax and polish

We like breakfast served at-----.

Have you ever shopped in a supermarket?

etcetera, etcetera, y contiene una frase que oía siempre:

Will you cook a Mexican dinner for us sometime?

Nos cocina una comida mexicana para nosotros alguna vez?

Barra el piso de la cocina.

Estregue

Encere y saque brillo

Nos gusta que nos sirva el desayuno a las-----.

Ha ido usted al super-mercado?

Martha Rosler,
Tijuana Maid, unit 4

American feminism's relationship to the body of the woman/European body art (including another duality: nudity/pornography), women as individual subject/popular history, performer/spectator, and the art world/larger social world. These dualities are readily identifiable, yet because they are not resolvable they remain in a contradictory stasis.

'Kaleidoscope', a series of eight five-minute scenes employing conventions from TV, cinema, and theatre, explores the relationship of middle class feminism as it shapes the private and public lives of a heterosexual couple. The contradictory positions exhibited by the two protagonists (both played by women) as they attempt to live their beliefs, underscores the unresolvable contradictions contained in even the most progressive views of social organisation. In a November 1979 press release Barry says of this piece,

It is in trying to come to terms with the world as perceived (a perception which is ideological) that psychoanalysis intervenes. As dreams, jokes and neuroses indicate, the unconscious does not describe a one-to-one relationship with the world. Jacques Lacan has shown that this unconscious is produced in language, hence the identity of the individual as speaking subject is fictional. Consequently, ideology's arbitrary nature within the domain of this fictional subject becomes apparent and yet simultaneously must remain unknown on some levels.

From our descriptions of the work of these three artists it should be clear that an important aim of the art in this category is the

critical awareness (both on the part of the spectator, and informing the work) of the construction of femininity. For it is only through a critical understanding of 'representation' that a representation of 'women' can occur. We do not want to simply posit a definition of 'good women's art', for at this historical moment such a definition would foreclose the dialectical play of meaning that we are calling for; our intention is to be suggestive rather than prescriptive. One strategy of this fourth type of art transforms the spectator from a passive consumer into an active producer of meaning by engaging the spectator in a process of discovery rather than offering a rigidly-formulated truth. Moreover, the art work strives to produce a critical perspective that questions absolute or reified categories and definitions of women. Both the social construction of femininity and the psychoanalytic construction of sexual difference can be foregrounded if the art work attempts to rupture traditionally held and naturalised ideas about women. Finally, a theoretical approach implies a break with the dominant notion of art as personal expression, instead connecting it with the social and the political and placing the artist as producer in a new situation of responsibility for her images.

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SUSAN HONEYFORD

WOMEN AND TELEVISION

Feminists have worked in most practices of representation during the last ten years, developing theoretical work and criticism as well as oppositional practices which have included the setting up of journals, magazines, theatre groups, cinemas, discussion groups and so on. The Edinburgh Film Festival in 1979 marked a decade of this work in the area of cinema. In television, however, while it would be wrong to say that there has been no feminist work, it is relatively under-developed in comparison with cinema. A number of reasons can be suggested for this state of affairs — the massive dominance of the national broadcast television institutions with their insistence on large audiences, and relatively little academic work or serious critical writing. Partly to remedy this neglect, the last twelve months have seen developments in feminist activity around television. There have been two areas of concern: the question of women's employment in the television industry and the question of television programmes made by women and often about women or issues which

particularly concern women. The immediate context of these developments, and to some extent the impetus behind them, has been the debate about the future of television in Britain and in particular the setting up of the fourth television channel. Whatever the fate of the Fourth Television Channel, as it is now officially called, the debate leading up to its formation has provided a specific opportunity to think about new and different (perhaps even better) institutional structures for producing television programmes and about the kind of programmes that such a structure might produce or transmit.

The Women's Broadcasting and Film Lobby was set up last summer at an open meeting held at the ICA (it was attended by more than fifty women from some dozen or so groups ranging from the Independent Film-makers' Association to Women in Media). One of its original aims was to act as a feminist caucus within the Channel Four Group which has been the main pressure group arguing against the notion that the fourth television channel should be a 'second ITV', but

50 which has had to be prodded into taking up any position against sexism. Later, in the autumn, the group decided to constitute itself formally and to widen the scope of its activities. As its name suggest it sees itself as an umbrella organisation covering the field of broadcasting and film, though for obvious reasons its efforts have so far concentrated on television. The Lobby sees itself as a campaigning organisation and presents a reformist position, though this might not necessarily reflect the individual views of all its members. The Lobby has a number of criticisms of the position of women in the television institutions and about the way that women are portrayed on television. It argues that women are under-represented throughout most of the managerial (including board level), production and technical grades in the television industries. It sees this as a result of a number of converging factors, such as the kind of education which girls receive at school; the kind of jobs into which women graduates are often recruited which do not lead to promotion to jobs of producer or director (despite suggestions to the contrary); a prejudice against women working in technical jobs and so on. It argues for more adequate training schemes; for the provision of childcare facilities and for a policy of 'affirmative action' which sets out to promote and train women in order to attain particular agreed targets of numbers of women in different jobs, to be set up in one of the independent television companies. WBFL has argued there should be at least three women on the Board of the Fourth Channel, one of whom should be specifically responsible for action 'to redress effects of previous discrimination'. WBFL took an

initiative which ensured that funds made available by the Equal Opportunities Commission to the National Council for Civil Liberties could be used for an analysis of women's employment position in an independent television company. The Lobby points out that it is not only that women are less frequently employed in more responsible jobs but also that they tend to work in the less prestigious areas such as children's programmes, afternoon television and educational programmes, with relatively few in current affairs and news and very few in sport or drama. Women writers, apart from the very well known few, are also in a difficult position partly because of fixed ideas of what is interesting to an audience which, together with the pressure to maximise audiences militates against 'risky' innovation and partly because it is much more difficult for women to operate the informal network of contacts which is so important to obtaining work. WBFL is critical of the way that women are generally portrayed across the range of television programmes from drama to current affairs (and not forgetting the commercials). Current affairs programmes are criticised for dividing issues into general issues and women's issues, with the latter treated as a specialised minority interest. The Lobby is proposing specifically that there should be on the Fourth Channel a current affairs programme scheduled for prime time, made by women but addressed to both men and women and covering all the areas which any other current affairs programme would cover. Its purpose would be to provide a feminist perspective on current affairs. There are obviously dangers in such a programme — its existence might

justify neglect of topics of importance to women, but even thus sketchily outlined it can be seen that such a programme would cut across many of the standard categories used in current affairs programming.

For the past few months the Lobby has been putting forward its case, some of which is outlined above, to the IBA — a meeting was held in 1979 with Lady Plowden, Chairman (sic) of the IBA and other senior IBA officials. Lady Plowden has been very sympathetic and had apparently circulated the managing directors of all the television companies details of the meeting and has discussed it with the IBA itself. Many of the points made by the Lobby in relation to employment of women are of course not news — they are substantially the same as the findings of the ACTT report of 1975, 'Patterns of Discrimination' (reviewed by Claire Johnston in *Screen* vol 16 no 3, Autumn 1975). The ACTT (which has had an anti-discrimination policy for a number of years) has now adopted four points made by WBFL as national policy: significant improvement in the employment and training opportunities for women at all levels and in all types of work; the appointment at the highest level of a woman in the fourth channel responsible for a positive programme to remedy the effects of past discrimination; equal representation of men and women in the governing and administration of the fourth channel; a reassessment of the way women are portrayed on television.

A second group which was set up last year is called 'Women and Television'. It is an informal study and discussion group which came out of a day conference 'Women's Issues on Television' organised at the Polytechnic

of Central London in May 1979 by Helen Baehr. The group has spent its time viewing and discussing different programmes, some made by women, and considering the limitations and possibilities of various formats for feminist work. In addition some members of the group have made an eight minute access slot for the London Weekend Television Sunday lunchtime programme on the media 'Look Here'. Like WBFL (of course the membership overlaps considerably) Women and Television works to counter the isolation felt by many feminists working in the television industry. While in some places overtly sexist behaviour and attitudes are no longer acceptable or fashionable this does not appear to be the case in the television industry and it is certainly not easy to declare yourself a feminist.

One of the areas discussed at the conference was TV documentary — the central theme of a weekend school held at the National Film School in December 1979. The school started from the observation that many of the women students at the school were eschewing documentary film-making in favour of fictional forms because they were experiencing difficulty in dealing with the conventions of the genre, their own relation to the subjects of the film and to the audience. (At the Women's Issues in Television conference on the other hand it had been remarked that there seemed to be very few feminists working in drama.) The weekend of screenings, presentations, workshops and discussions drew on work from independent film and television. Screenings included *The Song of the Shirt* (1970) by the Film and History Project, *Taking Apart* (1979) by Jan Worth, *Sweet Mother* (1979) by Jenny Morgan for BBC's 'Everyman' (sic) slot,

52 and *Women* (1979) by Sarah Boston, made for Thames Television and designed to be used in the classroom.

All the independent film-makers whose work was presented at the school had some sort of theoretical formation which informed their work — which explored film language, questioned identification processes of film and so on. They were also committed to attempting to establish a different relationship between the text and the audience by having their film screenings in a variety of theatrical and non-theatrical venues and by holding discussions after the screenings.

✧ Television practitioners were aware that they were producing programmes for a mass audience which was watching at home, usually in family units, and thought that they had to use the conventional format of whichever kind of programme they were working on to ensure their audience's attention but then try to shift it a little. It is important not to underestimate the importance for television programme-makers of being successful in terms of the ratings which can lead to easier acceptance of subsequent projects. Furthermore, for women working in television immersed in the institutional doctrines of 'impartiality', 'objectivity'

and 'balance', it was imperative to question those notions. The problem was with the terms in which this was done. People talked about the importance of being committed, of refusing to exploit the subjects of the film and so on. No-one suggested that the relation of the broadcast institutions to the state, for example, might have some bearing on the constraints of working in television. For feminists the question of this relation is of course not enough, and it is crucial to understand how patriarchy operates in television. Had some theoretical or critical work been made available at the school it might have been able to provide a common language for the two groups (whose positions I have polarised in order to make the points) to work towards a specifically feminist critique of documentary forms. What was probably the most useful aspect of the weekend was the way that the screenings, by bringing together a number of different programmes and films in a context of discussion, rescued them from the flow of television and the ghettos of afternoon or late-night viewing and began to constitute a potential body of feminist work on television.

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PAUL WILLEMEN

LETTER TO JOHN

Dear John,

Reading your article *On Pornography* in the last issue of *Screen* (vol 21 no 1) my initial admiration for the clarity and accuracy of your analysis gradually turned to a sort of irritation. This disturbance of the equilibrium in my libidinal economy sparked off an intense process of inner speech urging me to clarify my disagreements with you and to put my own reflections on the subject in some semblance of order. The reason for the irritation was that I found our positions to be very similar — and in some cases where that was not so, your arguments convinced me that they should be — but that there were also passages which I thought skidded completely off the track. In the end, I think you arrived at a perfectly respectable destination although it is also a complete dead end. But before going into details, I feel I must repeat that I find the first and most

substantial section of the article dealing with the three currently available positions on porn (the right, the liberals and the feminist one) extremely useful. As for the second part, where you attempt to go beyond those positions, that is where the zig-zag between total agreement and utter bewilderment begins, pulling the argument into statements which are true enough but ultimately beside the point. What does it mean to require porn to address the questions: 'What is sexuality? What is desire?' Either it is the case that porn has solved those questions in its daily and durable practice because it trades on the exploitation of their answer, or these are questions only psychoanalysis can deal with adequately (and, I would argue, has done so). To ask porn to deal with them strikes me as an evasion of the very issues you raised in your essay. By bracketing questions of

54 specific social-historical signifying practices and signifying regimes defined as porn, and by re-directing attention to philosophical and psychoanalytic issues posed in such a general and abstract manner, the specific institution of porn is the terms on which it functions and changes, has been lost sight of.

Of course I agree that we must try to go beyond the currently available positions and your essay provides some of the signposts for such a trajectory. All I hope to do in this letter is to pick up on those particular signposts and perhaps add a few more. Maybe in the end we will wind up with a better chart than the one you had when you set out on your journey.

The focus of my irritation centred on your footnote 12 where you assert, in a manner that tolerates no contradiction, that:

A bright point of light concentrated on the eyes of an actor is a standard indicator of an intense gaze in a film.

That is a mistake. Such a bright light, whether a point or a beam of light on the eyes of an actor/character, if shown in close-up (a necessary extra specification) does not indicate an intense gaze in a film. True enough, it is the indicator of a look, that is to say, it functions as the signifier of a gaze, but not necessarily of a gaze *in* the film nor necessarily of an intense gaze anywhere. It may indicate that the actor/character is gazing intently at something or somebody, or that he or she is being gazed at intently, but it also may mean — and quite often does, as I pointed out in an analysis of *Pursued* six years ago — that something is going on behind the eyes of the character, in which case it functions as the signifier in a

metonymic process substituting the container for the content. This metonymy is particularly common in *noir* films where a horizontal band of light across the eyes, leaving the rest of the image in relative obscurity but still plainly visible, tell us that the character is a psycho or/and has been traumatised. As often as not, such an image can have the character gazing at nothing in particular, signifying madness, blindness, or initiating a memory sequence. In other words, what is being shown as going on behind the eyes is not at all what is being gazed at.

The look inscribed into such an image is by no means always a gaze contained within the diegesis (between characters or from character to object). On the contrary, I would argue that the primary function of such an image is to mark, by means of a specific conjunction of signifiers, the look *at* the image, ie the look of the viewer as distinct from that of the camera, whereas in most films these two looks are mapped onto each other. While the look of the camera constitutes the frame, the beam of light on the eyes pinpoints a look which, although from the same position as the camera, is not co-extensive with it, introducing negativity into the image, a mark of difference. A different look is being interpellated. If we can say that in classic cinema the frame is absented (it functions as a masking of a continuous, homogeneous plenitude: the diegetic world in which characters continue to exist even when they are out of frame) and that the image as seen by the camera is thus naturalised, the beam or the point of light inscribes a different look which de-naturalises the image by presenting it in its 'to be looked at-ness'. Of course, that presentation can be and often is re-integrated into the

diegesis by articulating it to a diegetically motivated look or assigning it to a diegetic light source, suturing the momentary fissure and binding the viewer's position back into the network of looks that sustains the narrative movement of the text. But such a recovery manoeuvre doesn't eradicate the moment of oscillation, the moment of risk. To put it somewhat crudely, and therefore perhaps misleadingly, the type of image you specify signifies (as opposed to 'implies') that it is one pole of an axis the other end of which is the viewer's eye. The look of the viewer, is the signifier of that axis including its three constituent terms: viewer, image and the specular relation between the two. In that sense, its explicit inscription into the image functions as a mark of what in literature would be described as direct address. The mischaracterisation of that type of image in the context of your discussion of fetishism (which is where the footnote occurs) is as significant as your selection of that particular example is revealing. I think a comparison between the light-on-the-eyes image and other images which stress their perspectival or compositional features will clarify my point. Both looks are present in both types of images (the look of the camera at the pro-filmic event and the look of the viewer at the image), but whereas the 'eyes-image' distinguishes the two, the others don't and thus correspond much more directly to the structure of fetishism and its regime of split belief: the emphatically composed image both indicates and denies simultaneously its 'to be looked at-ness', while the eyes-image designates the difference and thus goes against the grain of the fetishistic position, dislocating its regime of split belief to some extent. And I added that

qualification only because there are more effective ways of designating the image as there 'for my look', as Buñuel showed with a razor blade. It is interesting to note that the more fetishised image, the one that both draws attention to its 'to be looked at-ness' and effaces, naturalises it by covering it with the camera's look, is usually regarded as the more aesthetically satisfying one. Freud's textbook example of fetishism, which you quote, is also an example of two looks being mapped onto each other: the look at the vagina and the look at the nose, the latter cancelling out the anxiety generated by the former. In that sense, it is the frame which constitutes the cinematic equivalent of the 'shine on the nose', and not the 'light-on-the-eyes' type of image which works in the opposite direction by dissociating the two looks. The two processes are radically different.

I want to return to the 'to be looked at-ness' of the image which goes together with the inscription of the look of the viewer, with the donation of the image for the looking eye/I. As I suggested earlier, the kinds of images that foreground compositional features such as strong perspectival arrangements or a double *mise en cadre* by having frames within frames, tend to play around, timidly, with the mapping of the camera's look onto that of the viewer achieving an increased aesthetic effect. Such effects have come to be regarded as evidence of a strong authorial presence, as marks of the process of enunciation. But the fact that the 'eye-images' you mention are in close-up separates them from the conventional forms of arty compositions. Whereas images in classic narrative cinema (eg Boetticher or Capra) use the frame as a mask, arty

56 compositions (I am using this phrase as a slightly pejorative shorthand, although I am by no means prepared to dismiss all such images regardless of the context within which they are used) emphasise the frame and, in so doing, also stress that the look of the viewer is co-extensive with that of the camera, that the two looks are one. In that way, they achieve an increase in their 'to be looked at-ness', in terms of an increase in aesthetic effectivity while at the same time retaining the naturalisation of frame as mask for a continuous and homogeneous diegetic world. Such images, directly analogous to fetishes, stress the presence of an organising 'I' which uses (directs) the camera's look to circumscribe and organise the viewer's field of vision thus denying the autonomy while acknowledging the presence of the viewer's look, making it present and absent at the same time. However, the type of close-up you refer to puts no such stress on the addressor of the enunciation: it opens up a space for the emergence of the addressee's position. Obviously, when one of these two protagonists emerges, the other one tags along in its shadow. But what I am arguing is that the two different types of images (one extremely common and liable to fill an entire film, the other more of a punctuation-image) each stress a different side of the process of enunciation. It is interesting that you should have felt the need to evoke the 'light-in-the-eyes' image in footnote 12 because, although it cannot do what you ask of it, it nevertheless provides a useful way of engaging with the process of enunciation characteristic of porn imagery, ie direct address: 'This is for you to look at.'

What is at stake here is the 'fourth look', as I have called it elsewhere. That is to say, any articulation of images and

looks which brings into play the position and activity of the viewer as a distinctly separate factor also de-stabilises that position and puts it at risk. All drives have active and passive facets and the scopic drive is no exception. When the scopic drive is brought into focus, then the viewer also runs the risk of becoming the object of the look, of being overlooked in the act of looking. The fourth look is the *possibility* of that look and is always present in the wings, so to speak. The 4th look is not of the same order as the other three (intra-diegetic looks, the camera's look at the profilmic event and the viewer's look at the image), but a look 'imagined by me in the field of the other which surprises me in the act of voyeurism and causes a feeling of shame', as J Lacan put it. When the look of the viewer is separated off from that of the camera, the fourth look emerges particularly strongly when the viewer's scopic drive is being gratified in relation to an object or scene which heightens the sense of censorship inherent in any form of gratification. In simpler terms: the fourth look gains in force when the viewer is looking at something he or she is not supposed to look at, either according to an internalised censorship (superego) or an external, legal one (as in clandestine viewings), or, as in most cases, according to both censorships combined.

In this way, that fourth look problematises the social dimension (the field of the other) of the system of looking at work in the cinematic institution as well as in the photographic and televisual ones. Direct address imagery which is offered explicitly 'for me to look at', stressing the addressee's look as opposed to the addresser's intervention, are particularly

liable to bring that fourth look into play in full force. When you suggest that the 'shine on the nose' image of Freud's example is produced as an avoidance of the woman's gaze back at the child, you in fact correctly but inadvertently stress the presence of the fourth look in Freud's scenario. The child avoids the eyes of the woman whose nose allows him to disavow what he has (not) seen lower down, because to encounter that look would threaten the pleasurable and reassuring structure of fetishism he has just managed to install. Whether the woman was actually looking back at the child or not is beside the point in this context.

Much has been written about the political importance of the activation of the viewer in relation to an imaged discourse, and the importance of the look in that process has been commented on at length by writers such as Stephen Heath. But what has rarely been addressed is the question of exactly how social factors impinge upon the reading of texts, in which particular mechanisms the interweaving of the textual and the social can be traced as far as the activity of the viewer is concerned. To my knowledge, only two credible, non-mechanistic accounts have been advanced so far: inner speech and the fourth look. For the function and importance of inner speech (a concept developed in the Soviet Union in the late twenties) all I can do is refer you to an as yet unpublished paper I gave about two years ago at the Milwaukee Conference. As for the fourth look, its direct implication in the social and psychic aspects of censorship introduces the social into the very activity of looking, while at the same time that look continues to be an integral part of the textual network itself because it is a function of the mode of address

organised by the formal features of the text. An example may clarify my point. The look at, say, a Wim Wenders film or an Altman film does not pose many problems. Firstly because the viewer's look is caught in the fetishistic process of disavowal through the play on framing and composition which simultaneously highlights and denies the incision effected by the frame: the looks of the camera and of the viewer are both inscribed but as a unity (thus dimming the focus on the viewer's position and illuminating the marks of the enunciation to be credited to the absent organiser of the discourse, ie the artist); secondly, because the mapping of these two looks binds the viewer into the spectacle, the fourth look is given less space to operate as a significant factor; thirdly, the problems inherent in the exercise of one's voyeurism having been contained (not eliminated) for the previous two reasons, the decrease in the overt sexuality of looking facilitates displacement (sublimation) and a reversal of the affect involved into its opposite, ie instead of shame we now have a positive valuation: it is all right and in some circles even desirable to be seen looking at Altman. This process forms the basis of the arguments around 'artistic merit' as distinct from the arguments around 'freedom of speech' that are made in defence of some forms of 'porn'. The weakness of the artistic merit argument has to do with the fact that when an aesthetics is offered as natural and universal, it becomes exceedingly difficult to argue the case of artistic merit without at the same time destroying the aura of self-evidence and unquestionability which such an aesthetics relies upon. Therefore, one particular aspect of the signifying practice involved has been

58 seized upon: the marks of the enouncing subject — which such textual strategies emphasise anyway — and the argument is consequently displaced onto the 'quality' and reputation of that subject, ie the figure of the artist. The circularity of that trajectory (if it is done by an artist it must be art — if it bears the hallmarks of an expressive subjectivity it must have been done by an artist) is the dilemma the liberal position on porn tries to break by extending the (bourgeois) right of freedom of speech to (some) non-artists.

Your reference to the particularly significant example of the 'light-on-the-eyes' image comes at an interesting moment in your essay. It occurs when you attempt a transition within a passage which itself constitutes a transition (a double *mise en cadre*?). It signals the shift from an account of Laura Mulvey's discussion of visual pleasure to the proposition that female pleasure has become a fetish. This passage itself marks the shift from a partial but pertinent consideration of the institution of porn on the basis of the Williams Report to an attempt 'to find a way of characterising the representations designated as porn so that they can be seen as contradictory and open to change'. This is perhaps not the place to argue that representations do not have to be contradictory for them to be involved in a process of change. They must be and always are caught up in contradictions, but that is not quite the same thing as being contradictory. This second transition eventually allows you to arrive at the conclusion that the questions at stake are: What is sexuality? What is desire? Interesting and important as these questions may be, I would suggest that more relevant

questions to ask of the institution of porn are: What are the terms of the social circulation of representations of sex? What are the terms of their economic exploitation? Perhaps these two questions can be summarised in line with the formulation you propose (again in a footnote!): Who do porn representations think you are?

I have no answers to these questions, but the issues they raise allow the arguments you advance in your essay to be put in a different and, I would argue, a more productive framework as far as an understanding of the institution of porn is concerned. The mode of address of porn imagery (which is the terrain you chose to discuss) is characterised by a profound anonymity. Most porn films and photographs are either unsigned or appear under pseudonyms. This is not to avoid prosecution, because publishers and retailers tend to carry the financial and legal risks anyway. At the same time, when compared to the smoothly flowing regime of mainstream cinema, porn is heavily marked by the process of the enunciation. But there is no author to whom these marks of subjectivity could be credited and who would assume responsibility for the phantasy articulated by and in the discourse. Moreover, the traditional strategies deployed by mainstream cinema to achieve an impersonal mode of narration which nevertheless binds the viewer into the diegesis, are not open to the porn film. The specificity of the genre requires a maximum number of sexually explicit images, which necessarily fragments the narrative, produces constant repetitions, makes the organisation of suspense and of an elementary verisimilitude virtually impossible. Strategies to elicit

identification with a 'character' are necessarily rudimentary because there is no time and no context within which to construct such figures. Hence the massive use of stereotypes and stock situations. Narrative is reduced to a minimum and becomes a barely (sic) motivated procedure for the juxtaposition of phantasy scenes whose combinatory logic is more that of the catalogue than that of narration. In addition, the very arrangement of the figure in the image re-enforces their status as specifically designed for 'my' look. Their 'to be looked at-ness' is stressed by the absence of the taboo on the look into the lens by 'diegetic' figures; by the arrangement of the body or bodies so as to grant direct access to the genitals even if this means that the protagonists have to engage in most uncomfortable contortions; by the relentless use of punctuating close-ups of genitalia and their interactions, etc.

In porn, there is no way the viewer can fade into the diegesis or, alternatively, shove the responsibility of the discourse onto the author. The viewer is left squarely facing the image without even the semblance of an alibi justifying his or her presence at the other end of that look. Porn imagery is perhaps the most blatant and uncompromising form of direct address short of physical contact. The substitution of the look for physical contact is precisely the essential precondition for porn and the specific difference which distinguishes it from other scopophilic regimes such as looking at family snap shots or Hollywood movies.

To summarize the argument so far, I want in fact to propose that porn imagery involves a direct address form of enunciation in which the look functions as the substitute for physical

sexual contact, the whole of that structure being articulated into the social by means of the determining effects of the conditions of production and the emphatic presence of the look imagined by me in the field of the other. It is via that look that porn imagery affects and is affected by the competing discourses and institutions which assign it its changing place and political function within the register of signifying practices. Crudely speaking, when mention is made of changes in the public presence and acceptability of porn imagery, it is the institutionalisation of the fourth look within a given social formation which is at stake. An institutionalisation which sets the terms on which the circulation and the economic exploitation of sexual representations can be organised.

Within that structure, there are different modes of looking. The dominant one is no doubt the fetishistic look because images themselves, as a category of objects, sustain the belief in a presence in spite of a knowledge of absence, regardless of what is actually represented on the image. This founding fetishism can be overlaid, doubled by a second order and more specific representation of fetishism when the figure depicted re-launches the need for a disavowal. Obviously, the depiction of genitalia, and especially female genitalia, is liable to provoke this. In the majority of porn images the bodies represented as objects of desire are shown as contained, sheathed in paraphernalia such as boots, stockings, garter belts, leather clothing, etc, making them into representatives of the phallus according to the mechanisms lucidly described by Laura Mulvey in her article on the work of Allen Jones. This disavowal operates by making the body into a phallus or by inscribing

60 elsewhere in the image (often in multiplied form) what is seen to be missing in one specific place.

However, porn also often plays on a second, more reassuring type of looking which can quite easily coexist with the fetishistic look, although it is in some sense the very inverse of fetishistic looking. It is less a disavowal of 'her' castration than a confirmation of the viewer's phallic power. This specular relation is dependent on the emphatic direct address evinced by porn imagery and interpellates the viewer as possessor and donor of the phallus. As you acknowledge in your essay, in such instances the phallus for the represented body is provided by the viewer. The representation of women experiencing pleasure is one variant on this theme. In the vast majority of porn, women are the space on which male pleasure and phallic power is inscribed. This can take different forms: through the disposition of the body so as to grant maximum access to the look; through the imprinting on women of the traces of male pleasure ie the dispersal of 'seminal signifiers' (it is interesting to note that in most porn the climax of the proceedings consists of the representation of ejaculation, and not of the woman's orgasm, which precedes it, is triggered by it or is left out of the story altogether). Even when a woman is shown to be deriving pleasure from masturbation, her body is always arranged in relation to the accessibility of her genitalia to the look. One rarely comes across an image of a woman experiencing pleasure in any other than 'display' poses, which suggests that the pleasure depicted is a narcissistic mirror for the viewer. The price the viewer pays for this guarantee of his/her phallic attributes is the price of porn itself: the radical separation

from the object of desire required for the look to be able to function as the phallus, as the signifier of desire. Security for the male depends on that separation. The 'always expected, never-found fulfilment of desire' as you aptly put it, is thus perpetually and doubly deferred in porn imagery because it requires the irrevocable separation inherent in representation itself for the viewer to be guaranteed 'his' phallus in this way. If it is true, as you suggest, that there is a proliferation of vaginal imagery and of images of women-in-pleasure, then this is the very opposite of 'an advance upon previous modes of representation of women', as you claim. On the contrary, such a development constitutes an emphatic insistence on the centrality of male pleasure and suggests that the male population in Western societies now requires to be reassured more often, more directly and more publicly than before. The increase in public visibility and availability of such imagery does address women: it tells them to stop threatening that centrality. The terms on which representations of sexuality appear to circulate at present seem to point to a severe crisis of male self-confidence. (If I had the time or the energy, I would support this reading with analyses of analogous developments in mainstream cinema: disaster movies about burning and collapsing skyscrapers, crashing planes, suffocating and exploding ships, toppled presidents, etc . . . *Apocalypse For Quite A While*). This address of women through the public display of porn operates indirectly through the fourth look: public visibility here means that the look imagined by the viewer in the field of the other is that of a woman who sees the images which guarantee that female pleasure depends

on the male's phallus. The more the feminist lobby objects, the more effective the operation of the images for the male. Of course, to actually be caught looking, to be found out as needing reassurance is quite a different matter. But that proliferation of such images coincides with the growth of the women's movement may well not be merely a coincidence.

I would also like to make a few points about the social inscription of porn images in relation to phantasy. Phantasy images, what we see represented within a framed image and the things we see around us, all exist in different spaces. The relation between subject position and image or representation is different in each case. The actualisation of phantasy scenarios or images in the form of framed, imaged discourses necessarily passes through the 'defiles of the signifier', as Lacan would say, and through the distortion processes unconscious signifiers are subjected to when passing into consciousness. In relation to the imagined discourse, secondary elaboration and considerations of representability are extremely important (more so, for obvious reasons, than in verbal discourse). Figurative images, as all porn representations of sexual phantasy must be, require a social setting and an individuation which phantasy can do without. On the one hand, the surfeit of specific details, the necessity for the frame to be filled, produces an excess of signification. But this excess is also a loss: the lack of fit between the represented scenario and the interpellated phantasy. In porn, this inevitable mismatch plays a particularly important role because it is more acutely experienced. Although a western such as *Pursued* is structured on the pattern of the primal scene, it

interpellates that phantasy very obliquely, while porn imagery directly addresses the viewer in terms of the representation of sexual phantasy. In porn, it is the loss generated by the friction between the phantasy looked for and the phantasy offered which sustains the desire for the ever-promised, never found gratification, the hope of finding the representation which would coincide point for point with the phantasy evoked. Porn representations circulate and proliferate on the basis of the institutionalisation of this process of loss, this repetition of separation. The institution is grounded on this double process of separation: the difference between phantasy and the necessarily located, individuated and socialised representation of sexual phantasy (ie the difference between two subject positions) and the gap between viewer and representation. Both aspects of porn guarantee that no representation will ever fulfil desire while maintaining the desire for representations. It is in the tension between approximation and separation that the explanation can be found for the compensatory activity associated with porn, ie masturbation (which, as Woody Allen remarked, is sex with a person one loves). In return, of course, the pleasure of masturbation re-launches the desire for the tensions provoked by porn.

This close connection between porn and masturbation tends to provoke a defensive attitude in social situations. Indeed, it is difficult to talk about porn without becoming too aggressive, too puritanical, too jokey, too excessive in one way or another. Your essay avoids this excess but perhaps at the price of simultaneously bracketing all the things I dwell on in this letter and which were sparked off by two items, two points

62 where a whole set of issues were condensed into intricate knots of signification which were then marginalised into footnotes. I am trying to signal this problem of excess in this response to your article by adopting the format of a letter which highlights and mirrors the slightly 'scandalous' aspects of a direct address mode of discourse which, in fact, is intended to address the readers of *Screen*, our imaginary readers located in the field of the other as I am writing to you. The most common defensive strategy deployed when the porn discourse is in play is the activation of *double entendre*, sustained double meanings, witticisms, puns and other joke devices. The desire to go and see porn or to circulate porn imagery is often justified in terms of: It is good for a laugh, or, It is only a bit of harmless fun. This was, for instance, Arthur Scargill's response when challenged by the women's movement about the publication of nudes in the paper of the National Union of Mineworkers (at least, I think that was the publication they were talking about). The verbal language that accompanies porn, whether hard or soft, stresses this jokey aspect, insisting that it is not to be taken seriously. However, to characterise and dismiss such a strategy as merely a form of defence, a distancing device, is, I think, inadequate. It would be arguable that the joke aspect of porn is a form of self reflexivity, a comment on the endlessly repetitive and stereotyped nature of porn discourses. I would suggest that this is also an insufficient explanation and doesn't engage with the basic mechanisms at play in the circulation of that discourse. Such an approach would have to take into account that the way porn actualises unconscious significations is analogous to the way

this is achieved in jokes. Allowing for the inevitable differences between jokes as analysed by Freud and porn imagery — differences due to the operation of what Freud called 'the conditions of representability' that govern the actualisation of unconscious significations and which, in cinema and in photography, also entail the mobilisation of a specific technology of representation — there is at least one striking similarity between the discursive mechanisms of jokes and of porn. It is a similarity which relates not only to the generation of the fourth look but also to its functions as a space (perhaps even the only space as far as the reader is concerned) where the social and the textual meet and mesh.

Todorov, in his book *Théories du Symbole*, schematises the process of enunciation involved in rude jokes in the following terms:

A (the man) addresses B (the woman) seeking to satisfy his sexual desire; the intervention of C (the rival) makes the satisfaction of desire impossible. Hence, a second situation develops: frustrated in his desire, A addresses aggressive remarks to B and appeals to C as an ally. A new transformation occurs, provoked by the absence of the woman or by the need to observe a social code: instead of addressing B, A addresses C by telling him a rude joke; B may well be absent, but instead of being the addressee she has become (implicitly) the object of what is said; C derives pleasure from A's joke.

The only modification I would want to make to this schema is that C, the rival who is addressed by the joke and who becomes the subject of its pleasure, does not have to be an other person: any censorship mechanism, whether internal or external to A, is equally

effective in setting in motion the series of substitutions and displacements described. Taking into account that the mode of address in visualised discourse operates through the organisation of a network of looks, the structure of address underpinning the joke process is very similar to that at play in porn: a man shows a rude image of a woman (usually) to another man who becomes the subject of its pleasure. The male addressee arrives in that place because of the expulsion of the woman from it. But as Poe demonstrated in his story about the stolen letter, messages always reach their destination. The initial demand of the man (A) addressed to the woman was a demand for *his* gratification, ie it was a demand for self-gratification through the detour of the woman (remember the schoolroom joke about masturbation being more efficient because it cut out the middle (wo)man?). The 'rival' is in fact this narcissistic double whose gratification is at stake in the demand for self-gratification: it is the addresser (A) in another place of the discursive process. His pleasure stands in for mine. In the process, the woman has been eliminated and relegated to the field of the other from where she (the repressed) returns as the subject of the fourth look. The content of the image, the represented sexuality, is what men exchange in a narcissistic circuit instead of risking their sexuality in a process that threatens the emergence of sexual difference. In this way, the woman is maintained safely in her place as the representative of the male's desire for gratification and avoids the possibility of her becoming a subject. Her refusal to agree to route her autoerotic desire through the detour of the male, ie to reciprocate through a process that both mirrors and thus complements, fits

with the male demand, would stress her position as subject. Porn, like rude jokes, is designed to short-circuit that possibility by the institution of a signifying practice in which men exchange representations of sexual desire. This allows the men involved to function as subjects and objects at the same time: one is the subject of the look, the other the subject of the enunciation. The representation of sexuality they circulate is the substitute for the address of the woman who is thus regulated to a space below the barrier of repression. The trace of her presence as repressed interlocutor is that she becomes the subject of the fourth look. This mechanism provides a way of understanding how a feminist politics can have effects within porn as a signifying practice. The women's struggle, in changing the definition of the 'woman' to whom the initial demand for gratification was addressed, therefore also changed the terms of the way she is transformed from direct addressee, via the representations in the image, into the subject of the fourth look for the male. The content of porn imagery provides figurations of the contours, the imprint of women's struggles on the representations of male desire and its object in the tortuous process of detours, substitutions and identifications attendant on the avoidance of a confrontation with sexual difference. The distance between the woman imagined as the subject of the fourth look and the woman (not) addressed in the first place, measures the extent to which feminism has impinged on male sexuality. The porn imagery itself addresses women by representing back to them those changes, ie the crisis provoked within male sexuality. To get angry about the figurations, the symptoms thus

64 produced is understandable but somewhat beside the point. Which is not to say that there is no need to fight the economic exploitation of that crisis by the porn business, because that business institutionalises and thus naturalises that crisis while at the same time exploiting, both sexually and economically, the real women who are required to model for the films and the photographs. To conduct this fight is equally in the interests of both men and women. If women are to conduct this struggle on their own, this is likely to lead to nothing but a change in the forms of porn, not in its function.

Afterthought

In the Fleming version of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, there is a strange sequence that appears to have been caused by the existence of specific censorship rules, but the way these rules have been circumvented is rather interesting in the context of these reflections about porn. The passage occurs when Spencer Tracy/Hyde comes to visit Bergman (I forget the name of the character she plays) who is kept confined to the apartment Hyde maintains for 'his' pleasure. She is kept there solely for the purpose of gratifying his beastly desires. Bergman is seen to be in a fairly distressed state when Tracy/Hyde comes into the flat. He starts by teasing her and ominously asking her: 'What shall I ask you to do tonight, dear?' (or words to that effect). He then proceeds to build up the tension by suggesting a series of innocent sounding activities and rejecting them immediately. He gets more and more excited as he comes close to enouncing the dreaded beastly desire he has in mind. Gradually, the full extent of the horror of his impending demand begins to dawn on Bergman, who moans in

helpless despair: 'No, no . . . not THAT.' Tracy replies 'Yes . . . Yes, my dear . . . you shall . . . SING to me.' And then we are treated at length to the anguished, tearful face of Bergman as she submits to this filthy perversion he had asked her to perform. I think there are few examples of cinema which avoid showing sex in a more explicit and telling manner. However, this substitution of singing for sex led me to think about the function of songs and dances in musicals. When you think about it, the structural similarity between musicals and porn films is truly remarkable.

Firstly, the musical and the porn film are the only two durable cinematic genres which derive their generic label from the specific scenes which form part of the film. Other genres are named according to their geographic, social or historical setting (western, costume, crime, war), their assumed effect on the viewer (horror, comedy, weepie) or their overall dramatic construction (epic, melodrama). Secondly, and related to this, the importance of generically obligatory sequences makes for a weak narrative structure for the reasons I pointed out earlier. The narrative functions primarily to motivate and link the musical/sex numbers. The degree to which such 'numbers' are integrated into the narrative varies in both genres, but each has the same strategy of effecting the transitions between the flow of the narrative and these static (from a dramatic point of view) scenes. Thirdly, the necessity to include such self-contained, relatively autonomous segments arranged as spectacles 'arresting' the look and thus, to some extent at least, suspending the narrative, makes for films that proceed in a halting rhythm. Also, in both

genres, such a structure makes it easier to add or cut scenes without substantially altering the plot development. Fourthly, in both genres the interrupting segments consist of bodies displaying their physicality, either in isolation or in unison. Dances and vocalising are 'routines', just like sex performances, where bodies are caught up in a ritual sequence — rhythmical movements proceeding according to an autonomous developmental logic. All this, as well as the precise place in the narrative where the slippage into song or dance tends to occur, may throw some light on the terms of the relationship between censorship codes and the forms of the musicals in different societies such as the USA, India or Egypt. If the performance of songs and of dances can be taken to be substitutes for scenes characteristic of the porn genre, representations of singing or of solo dancing can be seen as structural analogs for the display of solitary sexual activity (Hyde asks Bergman to display herself in the act of self-gratification), while dancing in couples or in groups would relate to the signification of interpersonal sex practices.

Maybe somebody ought to study the function of songs and dances more

directly in relation to the depiction of sexual phantasies or activities as well as in relation to the basis of cinephilia itself. One thing seems clear enough: songs and dances occur almost always in moments of seduction, of mystical unification or when one person displays her or his body for the look of the other. One obvious example where the Hollywood musical would differ from the Indian musical is that in India the dancing display tends to be centred on the representation of the female body, while in Hollywood the male body is at least as central as the female body, perhaps even more so (Astaire, Kelly).

See you,
Paul Willemen,
5 June 1980.

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John Ellis writes:

Paul's letter is a valuable development of the work he has been engaged on for several years. Its major ideas neither contradict nor simply add to my article 'On Pornography'. Rather, it provides a different account of fetishism to that which I was concerned to develop. It

gives a centrality to the construction of the regimes of the look, whereas I was more concerned (somewhat inexpertly) to argue the structures of fetishism away from the problematic of the literal and knowing gaze of the boy child traversing the body of the woman, and to move it towards a problematic

PAUL KERR

THE VIETNAM SUBTEXT

An artistic product cannot be linked to its socio-historical context according to a linear, expressive, direct causality (unless one falls into a reductionist historical determinism) but has a complex, mediated and decentred relationship with this context, which has to be rigorously specified. (John Ford's Young Mr Lincoln, a collective text by the editors of Cahiers du Cinéma, in Screen Reader no 1, p 115)

Cahiers' cautionary remarks remain pertinent ten years after their original publication; the linking of an artistic product to its socio-historical context or, more recently, 'the relation between signifying practices and the conjunctures that produce and consume them' (Mike Westlake, Manchester SEFT weekend school paper, 'The Vietnam Subtext', 1979) is still extremely problematic. Edward Buscombe (*Screen*, vol 16 no 3) has suggested that some of the difficulties in adequately articulating this 'relation' are a result of ignoring or at best eliding the (albeit relative) autonomy of the film industry and the specificity of cinematic signification. Arguing that almost all attempts to relate Hollywood films to

the society which produced them have simply bypassed the industry, Buscombe criticised the authors of such attempts for having

no conception of Hollywood as an industry with its own history, specific practices, economic relationships, technological and other restraints.

No conception, that is, either of the relative autonomy and uneven development of cinematic modes of production and signification — whose primary 'relation' is not to a context or to a conjuncture but to other signifying practices. Nor of the 'decentred' rather than 'direct' relation which obtains between those practices and that conjuncture — which is primarily located in the cinematic institution in particular and not in the social formation in general; in the mode of production, that is, not in popular memory.

In recent months SEFT has been associated with two independent attempts to respecify *Cahiers'* 'decentred relationship', replacing the concept of the structuring absence with that of the connotative presence, that is

68 to say the concept of allegory. The first of these was Fredric Jameson's article 'Class and Allegory in Contemporary Mass Culture: *Dog Day Afternoon* as a Political Film' (*Screen Education* no 30, Spring 1979) which sought to identify that film's 'allegorical structure' so that, for example, 'The police lieutenant comes to incarnate the local power structure' while the FBI agent is a 'shadowy embodiment of the forces of multinational corporate structures'. The second example of this kind of approach — and the subject of the present review, was a weekend school held in Manchester last November with the title 'The Vietnam Film: Text and Subtext'. John Thompson, one of the organisers of that event, has defended Jameson's apparently unproblematic use of concepts like 'embody' and 'incarnate' by arguing (Jameson, *Dog Day Afternoon*, and *Allegory, North by North West* no 8) that his allegorical interpretation of *Dog Day Afternoon*

turns it into a vehicle for the proposition 'Monopoly capital oppresses by diminishing local autonomy.' This proposition promises to work politically in an American setting because it can be sold as an inflection of the prevalent non-marxist propositions in which 'monopoly capital' is replaced by 'big government' or 'the state' or more vaguely 'the way things are going'.

The defence is a persuasive one, in that it seems to identify the dominant ideological inflections and discursive modes by which the film's 'proposition' could have been appropriated but Thompson has doubts about

*the whole enterprise of an allegorical reading. Could Jameson sustain his reading against an opponent who argues either that *Dog Day Afternoon**

has no further reach or that the reach is other than the one described?

The idea of films as 'vehicles' for various 'propositions' seems suspect at best. Furthermore is it, in fact, necessary for allegorical interpretations to employ monolithic concepts like 'monopoly capital' for Hollywood — concepts which themselves effectively extinguish the 'local autonomy' of specifically cinematic modes of signification? Jameson's own conclusion, however, is far less cautious; from an identified political perspective 'an indecisive aesthetic and cultural phenomenon like *Dog Day Afternoon* takes on the values of a revealing symptom'. At least two urgent questions need to be asked of this conclusion: what is the status of such a symptom, and to whom is it — or, indeed, can it be — revealing, apart from the already politicised? What, in other words, is the ideological efficacy of this, or, indeed, any other allegory.

The Manchester school set out to ask, if not to answer, such questions and at least implicitly endorsed *Cahiers'* conception of 'a complex, mediated and decentred' relation between text and context. Employing notions of denotation and connotation from sémiology and repression and surplus from psychoanalysis, Westlake and Antony Easthope argued that when denotative discourses pertinent to Vietnam were absent from the cinematic war genre (as a result of the self-censorship of the film industry) they would and indeed did appear instead in other apparently 'innocent' genres like the western and science fiction, albeit in connotative form. Furthermore, Westlake and Easthope were careful to specify both the economic and ideological determinants of that industrial 'repression';

economic, in that Vietnam was already saturating the screens of the cinema's major competitor, television, and ideological in that 'the narrative constraints of the war genre, premised upon victory, won't sustain or contain the fact of defeat.' (Westlake)

The starting point of their analysis is a careful insistence that all cinematic signification is necessarily polysemic, that there is always a multiplicity of possible signifieds. In qualification of this apparent pluralism they add that there is also always some kind of 'connotative lexicon' which, like the inflections of Jameson's analysis of *Dog Day Afternoon*, ensures that certain connotations are more likely to be inferred by certain people in certain conjunctures than certain others. These connotations, which Westlake and Easthope call 'subtexts', are by no means always apparent at the conscious level; indeed, Westlake suggests that 'the characteristic mode of the working of connotation is unconscious'. It is, of course, also characteristic of unconscious mechanisms that they are easier to assert than to refute. Clearly, therefore, the care with which these concepts have been elaborated needs to be matched with equal attention in their application. Sadly, however, this is not the case. Westlake, for instance, employing a mid-1950's horror film, *Tarantula*, as an example of the clarity of retrospective readings suggests that re-viewed in the 1970s 'the phobias of the story and those of the Cold War can be seen to be one and the same'. Can they indeed? By whom? In fact, the tarantula of the title derives, diegetically at least, from an inadequately controlled nuclear experiment which might well rejig our readings in the era of *The China*

Syndrome. Alternatively, one might read the film today in terms of the evolution of Clint Eastwood's screen image. Similarly, of a shack burning scene in *The Missouri Breaks*, we read that 'anyone who'd lived through the representations of the war would be unlikely to miss, consciously or unconsciously, the connotations of napalm'. The relation between film and conjuncture is hardly being rigorously specified here; rather a conjuncture is being selected and named — the Cold War, the Vietnam War — and that name being turned into an explanatory classification for films produced in that period. At its most vulgar this kind of formulation can only tell us that films connote conjunctures, that they are 'a sign of the times'. The problems with this kind of approach have been best elaborated by Buscombe (op cit) and have plagued film studies from Kracauer to *Cahiers* itself. Nevertheless, Easthope and Westlake's project and premises are too important to be ignored. Colin MacCabe, in an analysis of *American Graffiti* ('Theory and Film: Principles of Realism and Pleasure', *Screen*, vol 17 no 3) has noted that film's 'repression of Vietnam' and Easthope/Westlake's elaboration of concepts of repression and surplus remains a suggestive one. Having plausibly established that within the war genre 'comic', 'irresponsible' and 'politically pertinent' discourses might well be repressed, Westlake asks:

What is Dark Star if not a comic expression of the boredom and indifference destroying 'unstable planets'? (Find me something I can blow up' says acting-captain Doolittle to his crew). What is The Missouri Breaks but an irresponsible essay on how rotten you can get and still remain charming? (Well, old grannie's getting

70 tired now'). What is *Ulzana's Raid* if not a politically pertinent reminder how endemically racist is America's civilizing mission (something Vietnam films have signally failed to do)?

It would have been worth pausing to indicate which, if any, of these films were 'intended' as 'propositions' about Vietnam — not in order to argue against the school's project but to elaborate further the crucial consequences of such 'intentions' on the connotative lexicon. Westlake, however, is content to conclude that if the war film cannot denote, cannot 'speak' Vietnam, then

It is the Western or science fiction movie that is connoting the war in its unspeakable aspects. And in taking on this connotative burden, the genre itself is changed. One might even say Vietnam finished off the Western.

Chris Mottershead, reviewing Will Wright's structuralist study of the Western, *Sixguns and Society*, in *Screen Education* no 19 Summer 1976, described that book as an 'attempt to link the Western myth and its changes to changes in American society' but criticised it for failing to ask two questions about that 'link': 'how those changes actually come to be present in particular films as opposed to others?' and 'which changes in society create changes in films and which do not?'

In their enthusiasm to relate signification to socio-historic conjunctures, Easthope and Westlake effectively evacuate the cinema from the equation altogether; we are left with individual films but no cinema. To the argument that Vietnam may have finished off the Western one might want to insist, for instance, that

cinematically specific determinants played a more important part, for instance: the impact of the anti-trust decrees on the cinematic genre, its subsequent association with CinemaScope, Technicolor etc, its virtual eviction from the cinema following its appropriation by the television networks and its equally dramatic disappearance from that medium in the late 1960s in response to the advertisers' demographic analyses of its still sizeable but, crucially, non-consuming audiences. Similarly, while to Westlake *'Dark Star'* vindicates a knowledge of what it was "really" like in Vietnam with the spacecraft's crew characterised as 'seen-it-all-vets', one might want to reinsert that film into its cinematic/televsual moment, midway between *Star Trek* and *Star Wars*, a low-budget celluloid raspberry to 2001.

In *The Missouri Breaks* there is an episode in which a shack sheltering some rustlers is 'fire-bombed' from higher up a valley by means of burning material slid down a wire. For Westlake and Easthope this incident is polysemic and as such it can be read in at least three ways: (a) as diegetic link in the narrative — the Regulator (Marlon Brando) in the pay of a cattle baron, is killing a gang of cattle thieves; (b) as minor trope in a film genre, the Western, which can be categorised as 'novel ways of attacking men sheltering in a building'; (c) as the figure napalm, aerial attack and the burning of Vietnamese villages, familiar particularly from television news in the late sixties.¹

First, the question of just how familiar a television image napalm was in the sixties or later. According to Erik Barnouw's history of American television, *Tube of Plenty* (OUP, New York 1975) while correspondents were relatively

free to go wherever they wanted cameramen were not permitted on bombing runs and when Nixon began to intensify bombing of North Vietnam and Vietcong territory the television networks were being encouraged to de-emphasise battle footage in favour of material on the theme 'We Are On Our Way Out Of Vietnam'. If the visual evidence of napalm was available at all it was in the form of stills in the press, not in moving images on the screen; that is why the napalm scene in *Apocalypse Now* caused such an uproar in the United States. Nevertheless, one clearly cannot argue against the possibility of unconscious connotation; it remains a possibility though not, I suspect, very high in the connotative lexicons of Brando, Nicholson, Western, Penn or McGuane fans. (Perhaps, however, fans of Frederic Forrest will retrospectively invest the film with connotations of Vietnam after that actor's appearance in *Apocalypse Now*). The crux, however, remains the question of ideological efficacy. Is napalm or, indeed, any other icon of Vietnam not recuperable as simply another variation, another trope?

While Will Wright fails to relate the Western to Vietnam at all, Westlake and Easthope argue that all Westerns of the Vietnam era are, to some extent at least, about Vietnam. A recent article

on Hollywood and Vietnam in *Cineaste* 71 (vol IX no 3, 1979) comes to similar conclusions:—

One could argue that all Hollywood films of the period, from Bonnie and Clyde to The Wild Bunch, were to some extent oblique metaphors for the war.

On the same page, however, the article turns attention from subtexts to texts, speculating that:

Recent Hollywood films on Vietnam may not primarily be about the Vietnam war at all, but about something deeper, something more problematic, about the postwar American psyche.

The suggestion that repression and connotation can play a role in films which are apparently about Vietnam seems to me a considerably more pertinent and productive area of investigation than that of the 'Vietnam Subtext'. Discussing this strand, from *Apocalypse Now* and *The Deerhunter* to *Tracks and Heroes*, from *The Boys in Company C* and *Go Tell The Spartans* to *Dog Soldiers* and *Coming Home*, Mike Westlake has noted its 'reluctance to site the diegesis in the war itself, providing instead various displacements of which the most familiar is the 'maimed (in body and mind) vet returns home'. Thus the film *Dog Soldiers*, for example, is actually a thriller, 'a narrative of crime and punishment, a story of heroin smuggling sustained by the questions of who has the heroin and will they keep it'. The diegesis, then, concerns heroin smuggling. For Antony Easthope, however,

What functions in the diegetic [sic] as an object of desire (two kilos of

1 In his second draft, Mike Westlake has modified this approach somewhat: 'The signified "napalm" is only available to those whose historical circumstances have familiarised them with the discourse of modern warfare. And, of those, some will accept "napalm" as the meaning of the scene, others will take it as marginal or secondary; some will read the meaning for themselves, other will accept it once it is pointed out to them; some will refuse to accept that the realist text can have extra-diegetic meanings, others will refuse this particular meaning; and so on.' This argument is developed in Antony Easthope, *Notes on Genre*, *Screen Education* no 32/33 Autumn 1979/Winter 1980.

meaningless white powder) is thus available to the allegory as signifier for more general relations between the place of the colonial war and the nation of imperialist aggression . . . As allegory the text may be read as asserting that American involvement in South-East Asia is motivated by capital in a system of relations stretching out to Vietnam from its source in the United States . . . the heroin (capital) passes from liberal representative of the ruling class to radicalised representative of the class from which it was expropriated.

Just how widely 'available' this allegoric reading actually is, remains, once again, open to question. It looks to me, though, like wishful thinking.

Less controversial is Easthope/Westlake's contention that Vietnam texts like *Boys in Company C*, *Go Tell The Spartans*, *Coming Home* and *Heroes* fail to denote the specificity of that particular South-East Asian war; so too, however, do more 'reputable' films like *Dog Soldiers*, *The Deer-hunter* and *Apocalypse Now*. In these three films, which one might identify as the Vietnam subgenre of the American art cinema, Vietnam itself is reduced to the role not of text or subtext but pretext. On one level, of course, Vietnam has functioned as a 'pretext' (or, alternatively, an epilogue) for any number of recent movies including *Taxi Driver*, *The Last Detail*, *Nashville*, *American Graffiti*, and *Big Wednesday* as well as more centrally Vietnam-veteran films like *Heroes* and *Tracks*. The trouble with *Spartans* and *Boys* is that, for all their good (ie liberal) intentions, Vietnam is merely a pretext for another anti-war film. Similarly, in *Heroes*, the war is merely the motivation for a screwball comedy. In *Coming Home* Vietnam dominates a

film in which it doesn't really appear, but it is a Vietnam that can only evoke incomprehension, horror and concern.

For what, then, is Vietnam a pretext in *Deerhunter*, *Dog Soldiers* and *Apocalypse Now*? The answer, I would like to suggest, is the 'art film'. Each one has its own collection of 'cultural' connotations and 'serious' subjects: from Nietzsche to drug addiction, from Berkeley to the FBI in *Dog Soldiers*; from an epic canvas (Midwestern steel town to Saigon and back) to cod Hemingway (the deer hunting sequences) from allegory (the Russian Roulette episodes) to social realism (the ethnic setting, the wedding, the rendering of 'God Save America' at the end) in *The Deer-hunter*; from 'Heart Of Darkness' and the 'Hollow Men' to Herzog, and Michael Herr, from *The Doors* to 'The Ride Of The Valkyries' in *Apocalypse Now*. Vietnam has become, in Propp's terms, a narrative function, a plot device which enables other textual troubles to be explained or elided by reference to one unspeakable experience in South East Asia. Vietnam, evoked in passing, legitimates a vigilante film like *Taxi Driver* as art. It is a pretext and as such it evinces a privileged experience; indeed, the idea of Vietnam as experience (and, implicitly, America as innocence) is crucial to the Vietnam film. Vietnam is where vigilanteism, heroin, insanity and injury come from and where all-American boys go to. Writing about the Vietnam experience in relation to *American Graffiti*, Colin MacCabe suggested that 'The passing of innocence is reduced to the process of growing up. Toad goes off to die at An Loc but this is simply part of a human cycle.' (op cit p 21) Vietnam is rapidly becoming a license for the movie brats to indulge in ambiguity and angst, the twin constituents of art cinema.

AUTHORSHIP AND INDEPENDENT FILM EXHIBITION

INDEPENDENT FILM-MAKERS have developed the practice of accompanying the exhibition of their films as a strategy to redirect the audiences' viewing and discussion away from authorial readings and into political and aesthetic discourses.¹ The attribution of authorship, in the conventional sense of a unifying origin of a film text, where the text is assimilated to the conscious, intentional organising function of the director or film-making collective or whatever, is rendered problematic and a more open and decentred reading and viewing is made possible. This practice finds its theoretical support in the view that authorship is a phantasy construction and projection by the viewer and reader onto the film text. As I see it, this position oscillates between the notion of a free reading and that of a constrained one, indicating a weakness in the theory of the subject which underpins it. Phantasy, furthermore, is often taken too simplistically in the mechanisms and conditions presupposed in articulating the work of the Imaginary. The complexity of the relationship between the filmic text and its production and the viewer in any particular instance of a viewing is greater than the theory proposes. In this article, I will argue that the practice of author intervention in the exhibition of independent film, particularly political film, and the theories establishing it, involves problems and limitations at the level of both theory and practice. One major problem, not addressed explicitly in this article, is the distinction between the subject and the individual. If both the subject and the individual have histories then what follows is concerned with the individual in history in relationship to the subject, and what that entails, in part, for the question of authorship in film. The general tendency for these two

¹ For this view see:
Clayton and Curling,
'On Authorship'
Screen Spring 1979
vol 20 no 1;
R Stoneman, 'Film-
Related Practice and
the Avant-Garde'
Screen Winter
1979/80, vol 20 no
3/4, pp 47-8.

2 Clayton and Curling op cit, p 55. 'Author' here means the concept of author used in discourse on authorship, and 'author' as what is designated by the author-name ie the individual author. Clayton and Curling take these notions from Foucault.

3 V Porter has reservations of a similar nature in 'On Authorship: A Reply', *Screen* Summer 1979, vol 20 no 2, pp 116-7.

4 Stoneman, op cit, p 48.

concepts to be obscured in their operation is not wholly avoided here.

In a recent article on authorship, it is suggested that independent film-makers in acting as their own distributors and exhibitors are able to 'engage discursively with audiences, resisting the Authorial reading, displacing it into political and aesthetic discourses' and that with the presence of the film-makers at the viewing they can 'argue to disclaim the role of Author, obliging a discussion of the production of the text and so on'.² These quotations take authorship to be something which can be simply resisted, fought against and denied by the film-maker if he or she so pleases, with the result that the theoretical concept of authorship — the authorial discourses inscribed in the text — is concealed and ignored. The assumption that authorial inscriptions are capable of being set aside by an act of will on the part of the film-makers has various implications. It assumes that authorial discourses in the discursive complexity of the film text are not effective in other discourses in the same text, for example, aesthetic or political discourses.³ It also ultimately mystifies the film's production and organisation *qua* film text, by displacing responsibility for a film's production into a mysterious region and thus giving the impression that the film was an ideal expression of some slice of the total discursive system. Where it is conceded that film is produced and organised, this is usually a matter of economic elements eg division of labour, finance raising, and of the general political and aesthetic commitments of the film-makers. Stoneman⁴ states that whilst the film materials 'were assembled by the author, the unifying, totalising position (from which the interconnections are made) can be seen to be that of the film viewer', where what 'assembles' involves is left unspecified. There is an asymmetry in this consideration of authorship between the role of the audience and that of the producing subjects. Its mirror image in the practice of the independent film-makers is the assumption that authorship can be resolved to a large extent by authorial intervention. The paradoxes of such a strategy are not lost on many independent film-makers — they as authors are most fit to deny authorship — but further paradoxes, contradictions and ironies remain.

Importantly, two things are implied by the position under criticism: firstly, that politics and aesthetics can be read off easily from a film — this is the other side of the view that audiences can *readily not* read off authorship in a film; secondly, that a film can be made political by calling it so. The latter mistake is made

possible by the voluntarist notion of the film-maker as intervening in exhibition — politics, paradoxically, is a discursive element in the film because the film-maker put it there and at the viewing is drawing our attention to its presence. This assumes that authorship is not imbricated in the political or aesthetic discourses in an intricate way, and in fact seems to suggest either that authorship as discourse is distinct and different from other discourses in its complexity or relationships with other discursive textual elements, or that all discursive elements are easily read off — especially so by the film-maker. A further consequence is the film-maker seems to be assuming that his or her own inscription, and that of the other producing and organising individuals involved, is irrelevant. In political film this has the upshot of making nonsense of the possibility of political criticism being made of the film-maker and, in the end, of the film itself. In such cases, the problem of authorship becomes acute. If film-makers cannot be criticised for their productions then we can only take it to mean that a film text is the effect of a discursive determinism or that it is the 'true' expression of the film-maker's intentionality. A paradoxical state of affairs given the original strategy to deny the effects of authorship.⁵

In many ways this confusion can be traced to an asymmetry in the analysis. An analysis of authorship in terms of the way the text produces the viewer/reader and the associated view that subjects are constructed and positioned by the text itself leaves a gap where questions of production of the film text are concerned. It neglects, in other words, the fact that films are organised and produced and constructed ('assembled') by individuals — individuals with histories both social and psychoanalytical.⁶ The tendency in recent theorising on authorship has been to ignore this element. Nash and Neale in a recent editorial⁷ speak of *Screen*'s reworking of the concept of authorship through the theory of the subject so that authorship involves 'the notion of the subject, subject-ivity produced by the text, . . . the author as a fantasy construction by the reader, . . . the text constructing both reader and viewer'. Similarly, Clayton and Curling understand it as 'the general process by which readers, by means of what Foucault terms "projection in terms always more or less psychological", construct an author in the text'.⁸

The analysis of the concept of the subject, and how the subject is produced by the text, and of the phantasy construction of the author by the spectator and reader does not recast the problems of authorship *in toto*. The reasons for this lie with ideas formulated in

5 This paragraph assumes that political criticism and self-criticism are related to the problem of responsibility, both moral and non-moral. For a discussion of these concepts and related problems see P Adams and J Minson 'The "Subject" of Feminism', *m/f* no 2, p 53. Their attempt to resolve the problem of the subject in relation to moral discourse, is flawed by the Foucaultian social articulation of the subject, ignoring the psychoanalytical aspects of this matter.

6 P Abbott in 'Authority' *Screen* Summer 1979 vol 20 no 2 takes up this notion of Stephen Heath's but to a different purpose.

7 *Screen* Spring 1979 vol 20 no 1.

8 *ibid* p 40.

recent work on subjectivity where it can be shown that there exists an asymmetry in the analysis provided of the subject in relation to the discursive level of film. The 'consumptionist' tendency in question with its inherent reductionism can be resisted by extending and developing a point made by Stephen Heath in his article 'Difference'⁹ where he states that:

Everyone is the possibility of a difference in reading, reception, response (with that difference a plurality of differences across the 'one'), but the film is the same, a certain organisation, a certain address; the film, that is, offers something of a common terrain on which meanings are made and remade, assumed and displaced in any concrete situation of spectatorship, on which difference is represented, shifted, represented again in the difference of that shift for you and I. (my emphasis)

This passage suggests an asymmetry based on the notions 'same' and 'difference'. If there is always the 'possibility of a difference in reading' this is not to be taken as the simply arbitrary projection of phantasies onto film, for film, as Heath reminds us, is a 'certain organisation', 'a common terrain' constraining the readings and viewing of that film. The asymmetry is sited in the distinction between the *possibility of difference* in the readership, spectatorship and so on of a film and what I call the *actuality of an identity* in the production and organisation of the film text. This latter point is the articulation of the idea of the film being the *same* with respect to its production as textual organisation. And if the spectator and reader brings with him, so to speak, the phantasies 'knowledges, prejudices, resistances' with which he establishes some free-play in his construction of meanings in the text itself, then similarly, the producing subjects in the organisation of the film text *fix* those very same aspects of their own subjectivity.

This argument does not provide a fully rigorous articulation of authorship but it does establish what else needs to be taken into account for such an articulation to be achieved. In other words, authorship is to be dispersed into the concepts of the specificity and effectivity of the organising and producing subjects of the film text and their phantasies. The relationship is then simply not one between the text and the viewing or reading subjects, although the latter may be strategically or tactically more important in a particular conjuncture of film exhibition, but rather there must be some recognition of the authors as producing individuals with their own histories.

The crux of the position on authorship as creating textual fixity is that the author, thus understood, of the film text as the imbrication of multiple heterogeneous discourses, is not the site of a free-play or of a difference *ex post facto*. In this there is no real difference between the case of the spectator or reader and that of the producing individuals, for the spectator/reader is also fixed within the dialectic of the text and his or her subjectivity when a reading response has taken place. However, unlike the producing individuals, the same spectator can have different responses at different times.

It is noteworthy that within certain feminist practices, especially feminist writing and film-making, authorship is often constructed by women involved in such practices in terms of phantasy projection by audiences, nevertheless there is an ambiguous importance often given to the fact that it is a *woman* who writes and a *woman* who makes films. Film as a phenomenological expression of women's experiences and its relationship to the issues under discussion in this article is the locus of many tensions for feminists and for all concerned with the political effectiveness of film, the problem of film language, sexual difference and representation, audience and so forth.¹⁰ However, if it is important whether women are involved in producing filmic texts then it is not simply a question of their effectivity at the level of technical labour or economic organisation but also the level of subjectivity as it is inscribed in the film text. The denial of authorship cannot be a theoretical or moral absolute imperative.

The position taken up in this article does not deny the strategy of author intervention in independent film exhibition *per se*, but it does attempt to pose the problem of whether such a practice is appropriate as a remedy for the problems which auteurism poses. It also questions the authority of film-makers in engaging audiences in political discourse as if the makers of the film were privileged in their access to the political discourse of the film they have produced. If independent film-makers do make films on the basis of theoretical positions concerning the political conjuncture and with the explicit desire to transform or modify political practice or ideology, then error, bad judgement, falsity are central issues unless politics is a matter of 'self-expression' or formalism. It is the concept of politics which is most displaced in the critical discourse of independent cinema and film. The crucial position of the question of politics has marked the debates on independent cinema even when the notion of independent cinema had been insufficiently examined.¹¹

10 See Lesley Stern's discussion of these matters in 'Feminism and Cinema-Exchanges' *Screen* Winter 1979/80, vol 20 no 3/4.

11 See paper and discussion on *The Nightcleaners* *Screen* Winter 1975/6, vol 16 no 4, where the concept of politics is organised around a formalist aesthetics and an ultra-leftist politics.

Politics, too, is not free of phantasy. If the theory of the subject suggests anything it suggests that the subject lives in phantasy (the Imaginary) to put it crudely. At the level of the subject, politics is articulated in phantasy. Eisenstein can serve as a reminder of this — his films show a highly developed imbrication of the political and the phantasy projection of Eisenstein the individual, psychoanalytically understood. In this sense, the film-maker is always constituting the Other, through the complexity of discourses of the film text. The attempts of political or avant-garde film-makers to distance themselves from authorship, where what is understood is a refusal to see their work as stemming from a creative origin must not be conflated with the notion of the author as the mark of the unconscious in the film text.

In many ways, my comments are a rough and ready note to Stephen Heath's work on the complexity that is known as the 'concept of the history of the subject', for in the history of the individual, as Heath has forcefully argued, the social is not a distinct and separate space (of course, it has its own pertinence) set apart from the subject (what psychoanalysis addresses). Rather, in the construction of the subject in the Symbolic there is always implicated the social and *vice versa*. This is to defend against a reductionism either to the individual or to the social — without denying the pertinence of both moments.

In summary, authorship is importantly connected to the production and organisation of the film text. Phantasy projections and their mechanisms (identification, splitting) are not the sole monopoly of viewers or readers, but are equally at work in the production of a film, and it is the articulation of this relationship which is one of the central issues of authorship. If individuals see, respond and read films, then individuals also produce and organise them, and it is the latter claim which has been systematically ignored in critical discourse, theory and film practices. To resolve the problem of authorship by reducing it to audience phantasies is to miss the central issue of authorship, and, in the end, is no resolution at all. The interventions of film-makers accompanying the exhibition of their films are beset by problems related to these theoretical difficulties.

COPYRIGHT PROTECTION IN THEATRE, VAUDEVILLE AND EARLY CINEMA

Recent film theory and criticism have explored the relations between modes of visual representation and the socio-economic relations that pervade a culture in a particular era. John Berger and Jean-Louis Comolli have described those qualities of representational style which affirm and support economic practice and social relations. In *Ways of Seeing* Berger argues that oil painting dominated visual representation in Europe between 1500 and 1900 because its illusionistic capacity to capture the texture, lustre, solidity and tangibility of possessions was congruent with new attitudes toward property and exchange. Oil painting defines the real as 'what you can put your hands on.' Similarly, Comolli refers to the late nineteenth century emergence of film as a manifestation of the 'ideology of the visible' which dominated that century:

The second half of the nineteenth century lives in a sort of frenzy of the visible . . . There is again the development of the mechanical manufacture of objects which determines by a faultless force of repetition their ever identical reproduction, thus standardiz-

ing the idea of the (artisanal) copy into that of the (industrial) series.¹

The process by which certain modes of representation become dominant in society rests for Berger and Comolli on a sympathetic congruence between ideology and the technical qualities of artistic creation. But the actual social practice which affirms one form of artistic creation over another is described or implied by both as the operation of public preference, the audience's intuitive recognition that ideology is best served by this artistic practice.

This discussion of the relations between theatre, vaudeville and film in the United States at the turn of the century, an era of inter-media competition for the American audience, will discuss in concrete and specific terms the relation between cultural ideology and modes of artistic representation by analysing how one social institution, the legal system,

1 J-L Comolli, 'Machines of the Visible' in *The Cinematic Apparatus*, De Lauretis and Heath, eds, Macmillan, London, forthcoming.

80 served a critical role in translating the 'ideology of the visible' into the business practice of American mass entertainment industries.

Long before the current critical debate outlined the issues of art's material significance, economic and legal circumstances required that courts make determinations about art as material/intellectual property. The courts were asked to arbitrate the claims of competing mass culture industries, and whether those decisions were philosophically valid is perhaps less an issue than that those decisions contributed to the relative success of various kinds of mass entertainment.

What Comolli and others have referred to as the 'ideology of the visible' emerges as a governing principle in the legal decisions concerning the intellectual property of mass culture at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries in the United States. As a means of defining the reality of property in an era of big business, the courts' decisions to protect the material form of an idea from being duplicated in a visually intelligible and appreciable way rested on the premise that property (reality) took primarily visible forms.

Properties which lent themselves most readily to a visible identification were best protected by law. And as a corollary, the commodity which could best be protected against theft provided the safest basis on which to invest the large sums of money required to market a product to mass audiences. What Comolli describes as the ideology of an age was translated into explicit legal decisions which provided a strategic weapon for an entertainment industry whose product was well adapted to the courts' prescriptions.

Distinctions between originals and copies or forgeries, or between an artwork as physical artifact and the performances directed by the artifact, confronted judges and courts with philosophical questions concerning the essence of artistic creation as intellectual property. Those questions were complicated by arising in an era of transition from manual to mechanical means of production so that the issue of the basic identity of the work of art, or the question of wherein artistic originality lay, was challenged by the proliferation of the means and forms of expression in a highly competitive marketplace. The law's conception of originality and copy in an age of increasing mechanical reproduction did not offer the same degree of protection to these mass entertainments; consequently, the law of copyright can be regarded as a significant additional element in accounting for the relative ability of these theatrical arts to compete with each other. The law's premise of distinguishing original and copy, idea and material-artifact, publication and performance proved better suited to protect the motion picture and control competition in that industry than either theatre or vaudeville.

In outlining key legal decisions that affected three forms of dramatic art which competed for the American audience between 1890 and 1920, this discussion will indicate (1) the significance of the industrial context from which these theatrical entertainments emerged at the end of the nineteenth century, (2) the problems of ascertaining the essential identity of artistic property to be protected by law, and (3) the significance of legal decisions on this

matter in charting or directing the shape and relative success of these forms of dramatic entertainment in the world of national business enterprise.

Nineteenth century industrialisation in the United States was characterised by the mechanisation of the processes of production. The greater economies of scale made possible by mechanisation accompanied the quest for national distribution. 'The American System' of standardised interchangeable parts, assembly-line construction and division of labour which constituted factory organisation between 1830 and 1880 increased the level of production and lowered the per unit cost at the same time that the initial investment in machinery required an extension of the consuming audience to make this investment profitable. The quest for a national market, pursued first by the railroads, fostered the style of 'cut-throat competition' which business historians such as Thomas Cochran and William Miller have argued² resulted in the big business practices of the 'age of the robber barons'. Arrangements such as combinations, pools, interlocking agreements, and monopolies were attempts to stabilise the market and diminish the waste encouraged by massive competition and its duplication of effort.

In this era of mechanisation and invention, a cornerstone in strategies of market control was the ownership and protection of a discovery which enhanced the competitive position of a manufacturer. The laws which governed intellectual property as possession underwent a process of refinement and abridgement in the nineteenth century

as economic production was transformed by mechanical processes (patent law) and by modes of marketing that emphasised the reputation of the producer (trademark) and the publicity for the product (copyright).

Patent and copyright law protects intellectual property: ideas, discoveries, and inventions. Despite national laws forbidding the operation of business monopolies in the United States, these two 'natural' forms of monopoly were allowed as designated by Article 1, Section 8 of the US Constitution giving Congress the power 'To promote the progress of science and useful arts by securing for limited times (17 years for patent, 28 for copyright) to authors and inventors the exclusive right to their respective writings and discoveries.' The patentee enjoys 'the exclusive right to make, use and vend the invention or discovery' and the holder of copyright has the sole liberty of 'printing, reprinting, completing, copying, executing, finishing and vending' the work.

As a principal foundation of commercial success, patents in the second half of the nineteenth century increasingly became less the domain of a single inventor and entrepreneur who founded a manufacturing business and more a product of research departments — factories of invention — of major electrical and chemical industries. Gradually patent law, designed to protect the inventor's rights to the commercial benefits of invention, became industry's loophole to acquire the fruits of monopoly by buying patent rights, hiring inventors, and developing branches of engineering research to maintain superiority in patent production and control. Corporate legal departments grew and became an

2 T C Cochran, *Basic History of American Business*, Princeton NJ, 1959.

82 essential wing of management able to influence and respond to governmental legal policy regulating the terms of competition.

Competition among the related American theatrical entertainments of theatre, vaudeville and film between 1895 and the 1920s was resolved by the end of that era in favour of film. Reasons for the supremacy of film entertainment vary from its relatively inexpensive attendance fee, the inability of vaudeville to satisfy the public demand for novelty, film's facility for more fully satisfying the audience's desire for realistic spectacle, to film's propensity for incorporating the appealing elements of theatre and vaudeville into a single readily transportable retail commodity. Public taste, cost advantages and inter-media borrowing and absorption have been the most common explanations offered to account for the demise of vaudeville and the eclipse of the legitimate theatre by film in the first two decades of the twentieth century.

While factors of business competition proved the determination of survival and hegemony in American mass culture, they do not explore the comprehensive impact of industrialisation and resulting business practices which emerged from the era of rapid mechanisation in America. Differences in the ability of theatre, vaudeville and film to compete in the marketplace are not described in terms of their relative degree of adaptability to industrial practice. Nevertheless, as entertainment commodities, each of these theatrical arts is tied to an exchange system governed by the nature of a basic property which is merchandised. That property is intellectual, a discovery or invention which is then presented to the public in

some material form. In order to succeed commercially the property of the entertainment industries must be protected from piracy, theft, unfair competition. During the nineteenth century laws of copyright which sought 'to promote science and the useful arts' by allowing the inventor to enjoy the financial fruits of invention were increasingly applied to forms of mass entertainment.

Patent and copyright laws with their explicit reference to ideas and inventions, a domain of property which includes the arts as well as science and engineering, became a fulcrum of industry for the growing businesses of the popular arts and entertainment of the nineteenth century. Art as original ideas and as undergoing, like the rest of the economy, a transition to machine production similarly became a battleground for the laws which sought to protect artistic creation as property.

The very scale of production practiced in this era argued the urgency of determining the status of a work of art as a commercial property and the conditions that obtain for the protection and exploitation of that property. In the competition for business success, mass culture industries sought and responded to legal decisions which determined what aspects of their property could be controlled and defended and hence what pursuits might reward the considerable financial investment that national distribution required. Did one form of mass entertainment offer greater control? Greater opportunity for monopoly protection? Did the law in responding to mechanisation, the possibility of reproduction and pirating grant the same benefits to each culture industry? In particular, the competition between three coexistent dramatic

entertainments — vaudeville, theatre and film — demonstrates in fairly gross terms the triumph of that mass culture industry which was most suitably adapted to the practices of turn of the century business and the legal structures which governed it.

American vaudeville grew out of the concert room, music hall amusements of American taverns of the 1850s and 1860s. The forms of entertainment practised there were not categorically distinct from the forms of popular entertainment that evolved out of Europe in the previous three centuries. The minstrel show's singing and dancing, circus acts of acrobatics and magic, the comic sketch or joke were tried to a pre-industrial folk idiom with a long history. Two modifications marked American vaudeville in the second half of the nineteenth century; the attempt to clean up and refine its image of drinking, brawling and prostitution in order to appeal to a middle class family audience (expand audience size vertically along class lines) and to extend its system of distribution and exhibition which paralleled the nationalisation of American industry and manufacturing and, perhaps more directly, the evolution of the theatrical road show and syndicates (expand audience size horizontally along geographic lines).

Credit for this transformation has generally gone to Tony Pastor and the partners, B F Keith and Edward F Albee. Keith, more than any other figure in vaudeville's business history, has gained the reputation for institutionalising vaudeville and making it pre-eminent of all competing entertainment forms at the end of the nineteenth century.

The reference is somewhat ironic if one compares the nature of the

industries over which these entrepreneurs presided. While their roles might have been comparable, the businesses they managed were separated in many key aspects by a century of industrialisation which transformed the US. The vaudeville act per se, the product merchandised, bore little resemblance to other products of manufacture which pervaded the American economy and living style in 1900. The wax figures for the dime museums of Sylvester Poli, before he entered the vaudeville business, required a greater involvement with the world of industrial manufacture than did vaudeville. One might argue that in vaudeville the working classes of industrial America, and later its middle classes, found an anachronism, a reactionary mode of entertainment that bore few, if any, traces of the industrialised world of the workplace. Like the Currier and Ives prints of the 1840s and 1850s, vaudeville's pre-industrial appearance maintained nostalgic ties with a rural America and a pre-industrial Europe whose descendants migrated to the cities where they accommodated themselves to the new order of factory organisation. Only rarely did the world of the machine make its way to the vaudeville stage as when Singer toured the road show circuit with his 'performing sewing machine' or 'The Speed Mechanics' dismantled and reassembled a Ford onstage in eight minutes.

While the vaudeville act itself was a non-mechanised popular art, the format for assembling the acts into a unified performance bore a resemblance to machine structure, as the photoplay for film continuity would a decade or so later. The vaudeville act was a discrete interchangeable unit in a system of

84 eight or nine acts. Resembling a specialised machine component, it was performed three times a day, six days a week for as many weeks as the circuit lasted. Indeed, by changing circuits and achieving popular success, some vaudeville performers could present a single act for as many as twenty years, again not unlike those actors and actresses who entered the touring circuit of legitimate theatre and played *The Count of Monte Cristo* or *Rip Van Winkle* for decades. The vaudeville performer presented entertainment of a pre-industrial nature but in an industrialised format.

The fact that a performer could potentially become so identified with a single act suggests that the ability to possess or own an original act as a means of one's livelihood would be essential to the performer and to the employer who would compete with other vaudeville businesses or other entertainment forms in seeking the audience's patronage. Yet there seems to be little indication that a vaudeville act as an original idea or intellectual property enjoyed extensive protection of law at any period in the history of vaudeville.

Copyright protection generally lagged behind the business exploitation of intellectual property in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The first US copyright law of 1790 included maps and charts as well as books and was extended to engravings, etchings, and prints in 1802. In 1856 dramatic compositions and the right of publicly performing the same were protected by copyright. Paintings, drawings, chromolithographs, statues, models, designs, photographs and their negatives were not protected until 1870, considerably after all these forms had been merchandised in a competitive market.

This gap between the time artistic products were marketable commodities and when they were protected by copyright allowed those businessmen who built the largest scale of distribution to maximise the exploitation of the artist's work commercially with minimal if any remuneration to the artist. Only social value granting unique status to the original protected the commercial value of the artist's property.

Copyright law generally manifested a lag in responding to commercial exploitation arising from mechanical reproduction, but vaudeville or variety acts seem never to have qualified for strong protection in the first place. Vaudeville was not tied to print or publishing, to a centuries-long tradition of artistically respectable entertainment, or to a mode of notational representation which was capable of making subtle discriminations. Its domain was effervescent, non-literary, too close to personal style and modes of behaviour belonging to public domain rather than private property. Originality lay in execution and subtle variation. As a kind of folk art derived from traditions of public entertainment, vaudeville was not well adapted to legally supported conceptions of respectable art, private property or originality tied to material form which validated other artistic entertainments. For instance in the case of *White-Smith Music Publishing Co v Apollo Co* in 1908 the court decided that a perforated piano roll was not an infringing copy of the musical composition embodied in the roll, because the roll was not a written or printed record of the musical composition in intelligible notation. Similarly the twin requirements of visual appreciability and intelligibility

that were applied here were later applied to the motion picture soundtrack which similarly was determined 'not visually appreciable as to its underlying elements'. Although sound recordings were protected after 1909, the US courts ruled that once a recording of a musical composition was sold it was not protected by copyright from being played and broadcast by radio transmission. Music became a staple of radio programming requiring only the initial investment in the recorded performance of the composition. *The dominance of the concept of intellectual property as being visually perceivable and its copies being visually intelligible gives visual representation dominant legal and economic sanction.*

The trade papers of the period not infrequently offer ads or statements of outraged performers who claim that someone has 'stolen' their act which they first performed on such and such a date. And the pattern of big-time vaudeville breaking an act that was copied or duplicated by numerous small-time vaudeville competitors in major urban areas argues for the limited ability of performer and entrepreneur to gain legal protection.³ One might argue that the lack of union power or perhaps the lack of sustained dependence on individual performers or acts by owners of vaudeville houses and chains precluded a forceful lobby for legal protection. The transiency of the performers, the lack of vertical integration in the business which would involve the vested interest of owner in performer, may have shifted the problem of theft to labour, unorganised

at least until the 'white rat' strike of 1901, which was broken by non-union performers and 'special offers' to union members from owners. 85

Vaudeville acts might seek copyright protection at both state and federal levels. At the state level common law copyright, derived from British copyright law which dated back to the Stationers Act, gave artistic creation protection until publication at which point it entered the public domain. The case of *Ferris v Frohman* in 1909 determined that performance was not the equivalent of publication under US law although it was so considered in Great Britain. This gave vaudeville performance qualification for property protection at the state level but the laws varied from state to state, they were not spelled out in the state statute books, and in the absence of decided cases in most states, lawbook writers attempted to forecast judicial reaction to particular controversies.

Although state protection is referred to as common law copyright, copyright per se is actually a federal property right. Common law copyright did not allow complete ownership without fear of strangers making similar use of the act for their own profit. This could be acquired only through federal copyright which, contrary to the operation of common law, required the registration of a description of the act with the Office of Copyrights. Until the Copyright Law of 1909, when the law offered protection to dramatico-musical compositions (a sketch consisting of a series of recitations and songs but containing little action or dialogue for example) vaudeville acts would have to have qualified under the provisions for dramatic or musical copyright. In these cases a notational system which bore a direct relation to the performance was

³ eg 'Keith's Big Small Timer Cleaning Up In Boston', *Variety* 7 October 1911; 'Big Managers Desperately After Big Small Time' *Variety* 12 July 1912.

86 necessary. As late as 1914 the courts ruled that the voice, motions and postures of an actor and mere stage business possess no literary quality and cannot be protected by dramatic copyright. While vaudeville was both musical and dramatic in broad terms, the array of qualities the courts looked to to define drama and to tie musical performance to published compositions proved considerable obstacles for vaudeville performers. While musical copyright did protect the composer from having others publish and perform a particular song, the variety act which used music, dancing, some dialogue, action of various kinds generally had to qualify for dramatic copyright. The problems of defining a drama were indeed complex; courts used nebulous criteria of 'sufficient' plot and dialogue, narrative structure, 'morally uplifting' content, audience emotions raised above those personal emotions evoked by the lyric song.

In a number of suits alleging infringement, several characteristics of non-legitimate theatre performance (burlesque, revue, variety) were excluded from copyright protection. *Martinetti v Maguire* involved the alleged copyright to a theatrical spectacle entitled, *The Black Crook* frequently cited as the beginning of burlesque in the United States. Judge Deady denied Maguire copyright protection both because *The Black Crook* lacked originality and because it was a spectacle. The latter label was based on the revue's scant dialogue and dependence on action:

*a sort of verbal machinery tacked on to a succession of ballet and tableaux . . . To call such a spectacle a 'dramatic' composition' is an abuse of language, and an insult to the genius of the English drama.*⁴

The ability of vaudeville acts to qualify for protection under dramatic copyright seemed partially tied to the extensive use of language, although the case of pantomime and later silent film posed a quandary for judges who later admitted that a performance could be dramatic without dialogue.

That lyric song might be regarded as producing a personal emotional response rather than offering a dramatic form, focuses the issue of identifying dramatic originality in terms of the audience's emotional response. In 1868, in *Daly v Palmer*, the court decided that *After Dark* infringed the copyright of *Under the Gaslight* because the former is

*recognised by the spectator . . . as conveying substantially the same impressions to and exciting the same emotions in, the mind, in the same sequence or order as the original.*⁵

In *Bloom and Hamlin v Nixon*, also in 1903, the circuit court of Pennsylvania's eastern district was asked to determine if mimicry of the performance of a song constituted an infringement of copyright. While they determined that imitation of the singer could not be regarded as infringing, the court reiterated the discrimination between lyric music which 'sounds the note of personal emotion' and drama; there is nothing dramatic, the court claimed, about either the words or the music.

The determination of emotional response as the basis of duplication of an original idea bears relation to the

⁴ E S Rogers, 'The Law of Dramatic Copyright', *Michigan Law Review*, vol 1 (1902) p 112.

⁵ 'Dramatic Copyright', *The Law Journal* vol 4 (May 14 1869), p 267.

court's consideration of moral content in a theatrical representation. Judge Deady claimed an exhibition of women 'lying about loose' or otherwise is not a dramatic composition and therefore not entitled to the protection of the copyright act. In 1903, in *Barnes v Miner*, the New York circuit court decided that *X-Rays of Society* and the act which copied it in format but not in exact content had neither literary nor dramatic merit and did nothing to 'promote the progress of science or the useful arts.' Again the court tried to discriminate between the two versions on the basis of the emotions they aroused and determined that they were different because the responding audience in one case was female and in the other male. Quoting from *Martinetti v Maguire*, Judge Ray claimed that a real dramatic composition, if grossly indecent and calculated to corrupt morals would not be entitled to a copyright.

After the copyright act of 1909 which introduced the category of a 'dramatico-musical composition', the court had to decide, in *Green v Luby*, whether or not there was enough action and dialogue in addition to a series of recitations and songs to constitute a dramatico-musical composition. The question of what arts could be regarded as dramatic was decided in at least one instance on the basis of whether or not a series of events or incidents serves to form a connective narrative. In *Fuller v Bemis*, Marie Louis Fuller filed for copyright in the office of the Librarian of Congress a description of a 'Serpentine Dance'. The dance consisted of a combination of lights, shadows, stage settings and draperies in a striking tableau. When the dance was reproduced without authority, Fuller brought suit for an infringement of

copyright. Judge Lacombe held that the serpentine dance was not a dramatic composition. 87

It is essential to such a composition that it should tell some story. . . . An examination of the description of the complainant's dance, as filed for copyright, shows that the end sought for and accomplished was solely the devising of a series of graceful movements, combined with an attractive arrangement of drapery, lights and shadows, telling no story, portraying no character, depicting no emotion. The merely mechanical movements by which effects are produced on the stage are not subjects of copyright where they convey no ideas whose arrangement makes up a dramatic composition.⁶

With its lower admission prices, greater number of performances and wide-ranging format, vaudeville enjoyed a position of preeminence among forms of theatrical entertainment in the United States; by 1905 it had achieved a rough parity with legitimate theatre in terms of number of theatres. Legitimate theatre shared with vaudeville a similar degree of response to the changes of the industrial era. The performance itself bears a few marks of the changing mode of production in the economy, while the system of marketing follows patterns familiar elsewhere in industrial society. But the principles of originality, narrative form, duplication of a part of the whole, visual resemblance between original and copy or intelligibility between notation and performance, worked more in favour of theatrical art than of vaudeville. Tied more closely to print and publishing, theatre enjoyed

6 Rogers, op cit p 114.

88 more thorough-going protection of its property of written document and performance.

Although a playwright could not copyright the basic idea of a play (eg a man and woman from families feuding with one another fall in love), he or she could have protection for a published script and rights of performance. A novel could be adapted for the theatre unless the novelist published and copyrighted a dramatic version, and remakes or updated versions of older plays were permissible. Playwrights could not gain copyright for scenic contrivances or segments of the play unless they were ruled as central to the play's identity. The particular gestures or mannerisms of actors or actresses could not be copyrighted. Imitation of celebrity performers, then, was not ruled out by law.

Theatre's status as a traditional dramatic art and its documentation in a publishable format resulted in it being provided more protection by law than was vaudeville.

Variations of a play's central motif or imitations of acting performances, however, were well within reach of business practice. Theatre costs, including distribution and exhibition, were greater than film, which partially accounts for film's competitive superiority in the entertainment industry.

Introduced to the theatre-going public in the period shortly after 1897 in vaudeville houses all over the country, film was much more a product of industrialisation. The machinery of its production was closely related to mechanical engineering and photographic reproduction (electrical and chemical industries) common in that era of the factory. As the result of

mechanical operations discovered and patented in the nineteenth century, film was fully within the domain of industries for which patents were a central property if not commodity. Indeed, the rise of a patents pool in the years between 1908 and 1918 which sought to monopolise exhibition equipment and tie the use of film to that equipment set a precedent for industrial business practice which, while it was legally terminated under anti-trust rulings, has reappeared as the basic *modus operandi* of film industry organisation.

In addition to the patents on the machinery of production and exhibition, film copyright, like that of other entertainment industries, offered business entrepreneurs protection of their property and restraint on competition that was intensified by piracy and theft. In the case of *Edison v Lubin* tried before the Circuit Court for the eastern district of Pennsylvania in 1903, the court ruled that the Edison film, *Christening and Launching Kaiser Wilhelm's Yacht 'Meteor'*, was subject to copyright by the Department of the Interior under the title of a photograph. The act of Congress of 1870 which had extended copyright protection to photographs, it was argued, could include a series of 4,500 pictures 300 feet long as a light-written reproduction. The question of whether each of the photographs must be copyrighted individually was resolved by accepting the argument that

the instantaneous and continuous operation of the camera is such that the difference between successive pictures is not distinguishable by the eye, and is so slight that the casual observer will take a very considerable number of successive pictures of the series and say they are identical.

That the film's value consists in its protection as a whole or unit additionally supported its being considered as a single entity. It follows, however, that injury to copyright protection consists not in pirating one picture, but in appropriating it in its entirety (does this open the door to the piracy of particular segments?). One wonders if this line of reasoning would eliminate the protection of original dramatic incidents within the course of a film narrative which the dramatic climax of *Under the Gaslight* — the railroad scene in the fourth act — had enjoyed in 1868.⁷

Protected under the photograph provision of the copyright act of 1870, film seems ideally synchronised to the courts' rulings on the relation between original and copy, which depended on a direct relation between notational system and performance, which emerged from the legal conception of intellectual property as material artifact and on criteria of visual appreciability and intelligibility. Film's security was reaffirmed in 1905 in *American Mutoscope and Biograph Co v Edison Manufacturing Co* which upheld the 1903 ruling despite the fact that 'in taking the negatives the camera was placed in different locations'. In 1908 the Berlin Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works recognised the status of cinematographic works as subject to international copyright.

Despite film's compatibility with the law's philosophical premises about originality and intellectual property that had evolved out of copyright cases concerning theatrical entertainments — there may be several dramatisations of

the same story, each capable of being 89 copyrighted like the separate copyrights for a painting, engraving or photograph with the same subject matter — the case of *Harper and Bros et al, v Kalem Co*, over Kalem's film based upon *Ben Hur* introduced a curious rupture between film as material artifact and film as performance. The Circuit Court for the southern district of New York ruled in this case that the production of film as material artifact did *not* infringe Section 4952, Rev St US of 1901 which gives the author of a book, and his assigns, not only the sole right of printing, but also the sole right of dramatising it, and in case of a dramatic composition the sole right of performing or representing it publicly. Invoking the case of *White-Smith v Apollo* which involved the discrimination between sheet music and perforated music rolls, the court maintained the distinction between infringing the copyright of a book and performing rights. They ruled that as a photograph Kalem's film did *not* infringe a copyrighted book or drama (the material artifact is *not* a *copy* because the pictures only represent the artist's idea of what the author has expressed in words, the narrative idea is not copyrighted but rather the concept as expressed by printed words). But when the film is put on an exhibiting machine, it was argued, it becomes a dramatisation and infringes the exclusive right of the owner of the copyrighted book to dramatise it as well as the right to publicly produce it. One year after *White-Smith*, the courts upheld the primacy of the visual. The parallel between sheet music versus perforated piano rolls and theatrical dramatisation versus film passing through a motion picture projector

7 'Dramatic Copyright', *op cit*, p 267.

90 (both involving similar conceptions of mechanical reproduction) was not maintained. The principle of visual intelligibility caused the courts to recognise filmic representation as a *copy* of theatrical dramatisation, although they had ruled a performance of a song produced by a perforated piano roll did not infringe the copyright on the sheet music of the song.

Despite this limitation on films based on plays, the two competitive weapons of patent law (protecting production and exhibition) and copyright law (protecting the film commodity) were paired in the film industry in the early part of the twentieth century as they were in so many other American businesses gaining national and even international dominance. Such pairing was not matched by either legitimate theatre or vaudeville. I am not arguing here that this was the sole factor that enabled film to gain hegemony over both of its theatrical competitors by the end of the 1920s. I do think that the coincidence of the Motion Picture Patents Company and the Berlin Convention in 1908 granting film international copyright recognition argues for an extended examination of the importance of the legal structure's support for certain entertainment commodities. Explanations of financial success based on popular preference or a drive towards realism ignore both the degree to which mass culture entertainment at the turn of the century participated in an economic transformation and the degree to which laws protecting private property supported the success of particular commodities and financial arrangements marketing them.

Although many of the copyright infringement suits reveal the competition *within* the businesses of

vaudeville, theatre and film, the fact that small-time vaudeville was used to launch film and that legitimate theatres were converted to film theatres indicates that difficulties in copyright protection added a further argument for conversion. The national distribution orientation of theatrical circuit owners (eg, the United Booking Office) demonstrates the emphasis on developing a commodity best suited to that structure of marketing. If film minimised the cost of distribution and exhibition relative to theatre and offered greater protection from reproduction and theft than vaudeville, it was better suited to the scale of business of the twentieth century.

The Copyright Act of 1909 extended copyright protection to two additional classes of entertainment: dramatico-musical compositions and motion pictures other than photoplays. While the category of dramatico-musical composition would pertain to vaudeville performance to some extent, it is nowhere near the blanket category of non-photoplay motion pictures. A dramatico-musical composition may have less dialogue or less narrative than straight drama but it must have music and dramatic structure. It isn't a joke, a skit, an acrobatic or juggling act. But a non-photoplay motion picture can be anything recorded on celluloid.

We generally discuss the relationship between film and reality as an issue of representation, realism or illusionism. But motion pictures, like oil painting in Europe between 1500 and 1900, manifest a claim to reality by virtue of their *materiality*. Unlike ideas or concepts, they are copyrightable intellectual property. Like the electrical and chemical industries, film gained a natural monopoly through protection of intellectual property that

aided the competitive drive to dominate the entertainment industry.

The relation between the application of laws protecting industrial property and granting monopolies protected by government to the film industry and to other businesses demands further exploration. Did the legal precedents set by non-film businesses concerning trade-marks and copyrights, advertising labels and prints which mushroomed in the era of film's business growth service this entertainment industry which bore some close relations to them? In his analysis of the protection of industrial property, H A Toulmin Jr points out in 1915

*As is becoming the modern custom amongst the large corporations, moving pictures of scenes about the plant or of the processes of its manufacture are being taken. These moving pictures can be copyrighted as well as motion picture photo-plays which are taken in and about the plant; they are now largely used for advertising commercial institutions.*⁸

Stuart Ewen has also referred to those short films of the teens which featured a particular product as the protagonist

in a filmic melodrama.⁹ This manner of 'advertising' a product had found predecessors in the nineteenth century American theatre whose David Belasco had once (in 1912) presented a set which reconstructed Child's Restaurant in unique and complete detail (for which promotional service Child's stocked the set with food consumed during the performance).

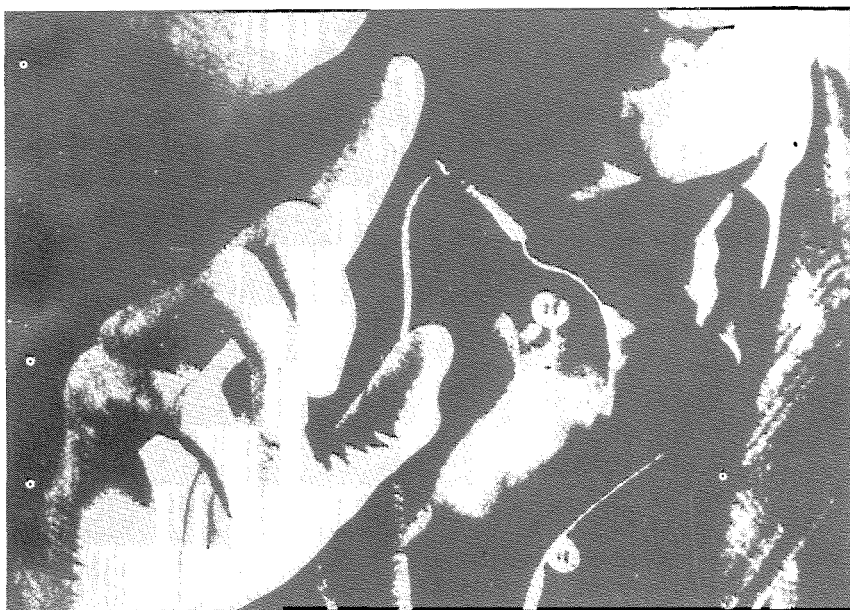
The growth of mass advertising in the era during which these theatrical arts competed for the American public provided a backdrop of business concern for the protection of brand names, advertising slogans and strategies, and in some cases, promotional entertainment itself. The rulings that protected manufacturing similarly protected the intellectual property of entertainment industries and vice versa. The relation of entertainment industries to other businesses and mechanically-produced commodities and their ability to succeed in the marketplace hardly seems incidental. By the 1920s the field of American mass entertainment demonstrated the hegemony of businesses adapted to and implicated in the structures of industrialisation and the laws which governed and protected them.

⁸ H A Toulmin Jr, 'Protection of Industrial Property', *Virginia Law Review*, vol III no 3 (December 1915), p 177.

⁹ S Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness*, Cambridge Mass 1974 p 221.

An earlier version of this article was published in the *Journal of the University Film Association*, vol 31 no 2, Spring 1979.

SOUTH WEST FILM DIRECTORY



This innovatory publication contains

- ★ A survey of activities, organisations and resources (national as well as regional) related to SWA's work in film, video and television, including material on independent films made in the South West and Super 8 films available for study, and a detailed account of school film-making projects.
- ★ The SWA film policy guidelines on production, education and exhibition.

- ★ Articles on the development of independent and progressive film and television culture, including the question of cultural funding.

The cross-references between these sections connect up all the areas of filmwork (production, exhibition, education). The *Directory* is therefore not only informational, but a polemical and theoretical intervention into regional film culture.

Available from SWA Arts Information Centre, 23 Southernhay East, Exeter EX1 1QG or from SEFT.

TERRY EAGLETON REALISM AND CINEMA

Nobody claims their cultural products to be unrealistic, just as nobody claims to be a vulgar Marxist. *Non-realist*, maybe; but non-realist art can be in another sense realist, and vice versa. The exquisite clarity of the debate over realism is now such that we can speak of realist realism, non-realist realism, realist non-realism and non-realist non-realism. All of which suggests that we are less in need of an aesthete than of a linguistic philosopher. If that is one problem of 'realism', here is another. It is now fairly common to find film — and literary theorists who argue at once that realism, as an insidious double-fixing of sign and subject repressive of productive heterogeneity and contradiction, is inherently counterproductive, and that all textual analysis is radically conjunctural. One idealism — an imaginary fetishising of realism as invariant effect — interbreeds with another: the dissolution of the materiality of the text to its discrete sites of consumption. The two cases are, of course, logically contradictory, which does not prevent many

distinguished theoreticians from holding them simultaneously. A thoroughgoing conjuncturalism of textual effect cannot possibly sustain an *a priori* rationalism of the realist sign as invariant structure.

It is difficult to see how such muddy waters are to be adequately decanted into the vessel of a pedagogical film reader on realism, though Christopher Williams has done the best he can. An admirably lucid editorial commentary links a series of 'representative' discourses on realism (Eisenstein, Vertov, Bazin on Wyler, Robert Flaherty, Brik on Vertov, Tynyanov and others), and the volume is organised into parts respectively entitled 'Realist Positions', 'Robert Flaherty', 'Forms and ideologies' and 'Aesthetics and technology'. William's editorial difficulties in some sense reflect the topic in hand: is he to subordinate this plurality of discourse to a dominant authorial level of his own, or his he to allow them free play? In rightly avoiding the monologism of the former tactic, he tends to err on the side of the latter. The linking passages, though generally shrewd and judicious, are theoretically lightweight, inadequate to the rigours of the lengthy excerpts they

94 quote. Richly suggestive extracts from Colin MacCabe and *Cinéthique* receive some excessively terse editorial notations, leaving an uninformed reader bereft of guidance. Beneath the weight of such offerings, Williams's own commentary tends to submerge, blunted in political cutting-edge and colourlessly low-profiled. Lurking behind this imbalance might be detected an empiricist implication that, say, seven pages from *The Threepenny Opera Trial* 'speak for themselves'; but of course they do not. In the end, through this undoubtedly useful morass of texts, the major semiotic, psychoanalytic and political questions simply fail to emerge in any sharp focus; the rudimentary degree of systematisation of issues which a catechumen might expect fails to materialise.

Nobody, on the other hand, could accuse Williams of mindlessly tailing some modish orthodoxy. His Introduction dissociates itself instantly from the reductive 'realism'/'anti-realism' dogmatism which has become fashionable in certain quarters, though its reasons for doing so aren't particularly exciting, and elide the point that such imaginary polarisations thrive on the suppression of history. He also believes, old-fashionedly enough, that narrative is more than a ruling-class conspiracy, and that most of its 'modernist' critiques have been dangerously simplistic. On the other hand, residually formalist elements creep in from time to time. 'Films', he comments, 'do not tell us the truth about historical conflict'. If this is taken to mean that films do not tell us something called 'the truth about historical conflict', then it is trivially and analytically true, since there is no such entity. If, however, it is taken to mean that films do not from time to

time enunciate true propositions about historical conflict, then it is empirically false. It is no use evading this problem, as Williams does on p 79, by gracing 'truth' with a capital letter in order to metaphysicise it irredeemably and so let it write itself off. The fact remains, as the pioneering work in the philosophy of science of Mary Hesse has demonstrated,¹ that although observation statements, being themselves without exception theory-laden, are continuous with, rather than disjunct from, theoretical utterances, this does not entail the kind of vicious circularity within hypothesis-construction which can license epistemological scepticism, since the truth of theoretical statements is a function of coherence conditions as well as of empirical imput and is thus not automatically self-guaranteeing. Coyness about 'truth' which feels the impulse to capitalise it overlooks the fact that there are entirely workable, if more modest, interpretations of the concept. The book is also perhaps a little prudish when it tells us that 'Naming is a process which involves language, not reality'. Try substituting 'singing' for 'naming', or developing a theory of language wholly free of denotation.

The reader is not historically organised.

If in doubt as to whether a writer is physically alive or dead (sic), the reader should consult the brief biographies at the end of the book.

I suppose this is what is known as 'anti-historicism'?

¹ See the recent collection of some of her major articles as *Revolutions and Reconstructions in the Philosophy of Science*, Harvester Press, London, 1980.

GILLIAN SKIRROW

‘MORE BAD NEWS’

— A REVIEW OF THE REVIEWS

More Bad News took on the brave task of trying to turn the stake broadcasters have in ‘impartiality’ against the heart of that very notion. Hence the screams:

The authors, sociologists to a man, know very little about journalism in general and television in particular.*

Louis Heren, *The Times*.

Studies such as this will do nothing to persuade journalists and broadcasters to take academic studies seriously.

Alistair Hetherington, *Glasgow Herald*.

As far as ‘academic studies’ are concerned ‘impartiality’ is dead and *More Bad News* simply another nail in its coffin. The book must be judged, then, not primarily as a new contribution to knowledge but as a ‘campaign’ book, and therefore partly on the extent to which it is ‘taken seriously’ by journalists and broadcasters. Some indication of this is given by the four main reviews it received, which appeared in: *The Listener* (8 May 1980) written by Phillip Whitehead and headed ‘Mutilated stumps’; *The Times*, (15 May 1980) written by Louis Heren, and headed ‘Grey areas’; *The Guardian* (1 May 1980) written by Stuart Hood,

under the heading ‘The nature of newstalk’; *The Glasgow Herald* (24 April 1980) which, though only a local paper, contained a piece by Alistair Hetherington whose views as ex-editor of *The Guardian* and ex-Controller BBC Scotland cannot be ignored. His review appeared under the heading ‘Where academic codswallop is in the air’.

More Bad News describes itself as an examination of the ways in which it may happen that news bulletins fail ‘to be consistent with their own proclaimed standards of neutrality and impartiality’. The book has three main parts or ‘levels of analysis’. The first part sets out the economic background and the industrial issues of the period studied — the first four months of 1975. It indicates as a ‘reality-test’ the range of economic judgements available at the time concerning what was wrong with the economy, and it goes on to show how the news ‘focused predominantly on a particular view of the role of wages as causing inflation’, using this ‘story’ or ‘frame of reference’ to organise and shape industrial coverage during the period. The second part, written mainly by Howard Davis, takes up questions of language in the industrial coverage of the same period. It looks at reported speech, the vocabulary of industrial news, and ‘the structuring of information, the imputation of causes, the pattern of interviewer questions, the use of

Glasgow University Media Group, *More Bad News* (vol 2 of *Bad News*) Routledge, London, 1980.

* There was one woman on the team.

96 rhetoric and so on'. Its approaches include those of socio-linguistics, anthropological and inter-actional linguistics and information theory. The third part, written mainly by Brian Winston, examines the total news output of one week — a week not taken from the four month period discussed in parts one and two but from a later date — and attempts 'to uncover the rules governing its visual presentation'. To do this it uses a version of Peirce's semiotics:

We asked the question 'To what extent are the words being used to describe pictures iconically (simply descriptive), indexically (partially descriptive), or symbolically (non-descriptive)?'.

The Listener gave perhaps the most straightforward review. Phillip Whitehead thought the study 'commanded respect' and should be 'required reading for everyone who aspires to be a television journalist'. The review follows the framework of the book, selecting something to comment on from each of the 'three big ideas bumping around in this second volume'. On the 'story' level the review comments on official figures being used to fit the frame or reference:

BBC News actually altered the indicator of wage rises from the index of average earnings to that for basic weekly wage rates - which it used the better to punch home the message of Mr. Healey's 1975 budget.

From the language 'level' only vocabulary items were mentioned:

We are firmly in the world in which employers make 'offers' and workers make 'demands' or 'threats'.

The third part of the book *The Listener* finds 'the most unexpected': for 'the analysis seems to show that neither film nor stills are used iconically, but are subordinate to the commentary'. This will apparently come as a shock to those 'brought up on the old truism that the eye defeats the ear, that the availability of pictures structures the bulletin'. Perhaps structuring by availability of pictures is less shocking because the pictures seem to have some inherent, truthful, connection with the real world which the commentary does not? Later in his piece, however, Whitehead quotes with equal surprise but no sense of contradiction an incident (reported by one Jerry Mander in a book Whitehead is reviewing together with *More Bad News*) which emphasises the importance of the compelling visual:

When Mander tried to get television interested in saving redwoods from the lumber companies he found them uninterested in pictures of redwood groves. When he switched to footage of acres of mutilated stumps they could not get enough.

One explanation of the apparent lack of contradiction here is that it is hard for the author, and even harder for news practitioners to admit that news is anything other than a (condensed) reflection of events in the real world, so they are constantly surprised by any evidence of construction.

The Times reviewer cannot even see construction while he is describing it:

They suggest that much of the film used by BBC and ITN news programmes is selected to support the spoken word . . and rarely portrays what happened when it was actually happening. I am

not sure how they arrived at this conclusion . . . but I do know that cameras . . . are rarely present when news breaks. The reasons should be obvious. A great deal of news is unpredictable.

Later he 'explains' that news programmes 'are received in the home as part of the evening's entertainment'. He feels that though the show-biz aspect has been 'successfully resisted by most of the reporters' (my italics), they 'work under impossible conditions' which equally obviously must have their effects:

They are supposed to cover the world in half an hour, which means that they must simplify and select. The grey areas, which can provide the balance, must be edited out.

To be fair to the *More Bad News* team they do not identify groups of people, and certainly not reporters, as the source of messages, and when they speak of construction they do not blame anyone. Nevertheless, since they do not theorise the institution of television news, their work can, and inevitably is, read as relating to particular personnel doing some particular constructing. One strength of this weakness is that the *Bad News* studies are (contrary to media protestations) taken very seriously indeed. *More Bad News* quotes from the minutes of 'the most senior policy-making committee of the BBC in the news and current affairs area in 1976', as revealed in *The Leveller*, January 1978:

DG said there would be no sense in attacking Bad News in detail . . . he thought however that the ideology of sociologists was a subject which would repay a little study and hoped it would

be possible for a programme like 'Analysis' to tackle it.

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These days some sections of the BBC adopt the more open tactic of broadcasting discussions in which its representatives can say to the *More Bad News* team:

You feel our industrial coverage was biased. Someone might argue that you were biased.

Simon Jenkins, 'The Editors', BBC 1, 30 June, 1980.

Which gives Paul Walton, a team member responsible for overall editing of the book, the chance to reply that 'the refutation of the statistics is what is at issue'.

The Glasgow Herald's review tries to outflank the statistics manoeuvre. Alistair Hetherington demonstrates that it is possible to re-interpret statistics to show almost anything you want:

In a BBC total of 24 statements, 10 identified wages as a cause of inflation, 10 identified oil prices, two referred to government borrowing, and one each to world recession and foreign imports. Not an unjust tally surely.

This use of statistics is one of the reasons he gives for finding *More Bad News* 'academic codswallop':

And what a misfortune that is. The performance of television and radio. . . badly needs informed criticism. It is an area largely neglected in the universities.

But the misfortune is the Catch 22 situation that unless critical studies respond to the media's terms of debate (the calls for evidence, facts and statistics) they will be largely ignored

28 by the media; while the studies which do so respond will tend to be unsupported by other academics working on the media, since for them it is precisely the nature of 'evidence' and 'facts' that is in question.

Both *The Glasgow Herald* and *The Times* see no difficulty in grounding facts in 'common assumptions', the largely shared 'vision of society' or the 'consensus' — the existence of which, according to *The Times*, is proved by public opinion polls. As for newsworthy facts, both papers challenge the competence of the authors of *More Bad News* to make any judgements in this area. The practitioners on 'The Editors' programme on 30 June also inevitably told Paul Walton that he had 'a misconception of what news is about', while they themselves took pride in not being able to articulate their own conceptualisation except in the form of 'News is news!'

Stuart Hood in his review in *The Guardian* links media-people's nervousness of criticism with this inability to articulate what they are actually doing:

It is in the nature of ideology . . . that the ideas which it expresses are seen by those who convey them as being 'natural' or merely a matter of 'common-sense'. In other words, the kind of judgement which lies behind the choice of one word rather than another, of one image rather than another . . . is felt to be instinctive, bound up with that sixth sense; 'News sense'. It is these 'instinctive' judgements which enable news editors to make the 'correct' judgements when working at speed . . . if this assumption is valid then it seems logical to conclude that an analysis of their 'common sense' judgements will be seen as a threat to their ability to operate and therefore to

be effective in their jobs. It is little wonder that they feel nervous.

It may seem that only *The Guardian* review is productive since it is the only one which sees the issues in terms of naturalism as opposed to bias. But I do not think the other reviews give cause for pessimism either. Notions of bias can start discussions between media workers and academics that are not always unproductive. And the aggression of the *Bad News* volumes has caused meetings to take place which would otherwise never have happened — despite the discreet charm of a group of Open University producers who teased one of the *Bad News* authors that in order to change production practices it was only necessary to 'take us out to dinner, be nice to us, and tell us what you want us to do'. The first volume also influenced the Annan Committee and though it did not shake their faith in 'impartiality' (what could?), the Committee did endorse many of the findings about industrial coverage and this, if not *Bad News* itself, may lead to 'reformed practices' within the news organisations. The BBC at least seems to be making an effort now to understand the issues — even though there is no perceptible change in the news. An independent research unit to monitor the output of television will also shortly be set up, as recommended by the Annan report.

Perhaps an even more important function of the book is to start a debate among the audience. *The Guardian* observes that:

It will be difficult for readers of these chapters not to see television news afresh

and although these particular chapters

are rather long and dense, a paperback summary of the findings may be produced in the near future. At least the issues raised there will be more worthy of discussion than whether or not we want breakfast television or a new franchise area in the Midlands. The books were, of course, directly concerned with trade unions and how they saw themselves represented in television news. For them it is a pity that both books seem to have been addressed to the media rather than to the unions, but *Bad News* led to a paperback publication, *Trade Unions and the Media*, which is more directly relevant to them, and the authors have been invited to do a lot of work with the unions as a result of the publication of *Bad News*. Phillip Whitehead suggested in his reviews that there should be more programmes for trade unionists and while this is hardly a solution to the questions about news, Granada's initiative in setting up such programmes is to be welcomed. All this to suggest that the impact of the *Bad News* books cannot be judged simply on what is contained between the covers.

Most important, there is a great deal of useful information accumulated in these volumes which is very suggestive for further work:

We were arguing that the ideology of news which requires it to be neutral, unbiased, impartial and balanced merely leads to a 'naturalism' on the level of stylistics.

The authors have not (yet) pulled together all the work to develop this approach fully. Collecting and organising the information must have taken a considerable time, and co-ordinating it is not helped by the use of a different analytical approach for each

level, different levels focusing on different material and having inconsistent theoretical assumptions of the relations between representations and the real. But the information is all there for analysis that is both ideological and political. In different parts of the text the authors show, for example, how the news produces effects of revealing the real world, and revealing it as it is now, at the moment of transmission: the newscaster is sitting in the studio at the very time he or she is seen there; the news is *live* and its work known to be continuing while other programmes are on the screen; the fantasy is that the 'reality' of news could interrupt those programmes not only at nine or ten o'clock but at any time — as the (televised) reality of the Iranian Embassy Siege actually did. In the context of all this 'liveness', the time of the image of any still or film used in the news is, of course, fused (confused) with the time of the events shown.

'I am the Messenger, I am the Town Crier' claims Richard Baker. He and his colleagues summon us to receive messages. They address us directly — with the help of autocue — and introduce to us a variety of people and places, all ordered in time, and for us. All representations are for us — ours — and just as the door of No 10 Downing Street represents for us the reality of Mrs Thatcher, so the place from which a reporter speaks represents and seems to guarantee the reality of the events he or she describes. In this context it does not seem absurd, to find MP Dr Jeremy Bray representing 'the workers'. And so on.

To break with this activity of news would, however, involve changes more radical than the broadcasting organisations could contemplate.